Chapter I
Recognition as a Mode of Addressing Issues of Ethnic Diversity and Conflict

In multi-ethnic or multinational societies, "multiculturalism" is an unavoidable contrivance. We cannot neglect its values and its insights are important for democratic societies. In a society where various groups exist justice cannot be brought about by merely promoting universal individual rights. The hope of treating all individuals equally or the hope of promoting justice and equality in the society by merely providing universal individual rights is meaningless since individuals are not isolated units but members of certain groups or cultural communities, for that matter. Thus, we need to consider the role of multiculturalism in enhancing the scope of justice by taking into the importance of cultural membership of individuals. It will ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity.

Today, almost everyone in the academic world understands the importance and necessity of the movement, called multiculturalism. This is not a new cognition that the diverse cultural, ethnic and religious communities have distinct ways of life, which cultural communities cherish and want to preserve. That is why philosophers like Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka had long back written against cultural non-recognition or misrecognition. The whole idea is that cultural non-recognition and disrespect tends to produce negative impact on the stability of the social system. Look at those steps taken by multicultural States in order to rectify such injustices against minority cultures. The cases of Australia, Canada and other continental States exemplify this well. The point I want to bring home here is that the State should respect diverse cultures. And the respect for diversity implies equal space and
opportunity for all cultural communities to sustain themselves. It will make sure that all citizens can keep their identities, can feel elation on their pedigree and have a sense of belonging. Such acceptance will not only give citizens a feeling of security and self confidence, making them more open to, and accepting of, diverse cultures, but also encourages racial and ethnic harmony and cross cultural understanding.

The fundamental notion of multiculturalism is that the diverse cultural, ethnic or religious communities have distinct ways of life, which they cherish and wish to preserve. Since each cultural value is different from the values of other cultures, some of the practices of one particular community conflict with those of other cultural practices. At times, the cultural practices conflict not only with other cultural values but also the very values liberal society holds dear. The problems of cultural diversity in a liberal democratic society are quite common. The selection of a particular day for reasons like rest, public holiday, language policy, etc., is good example. In view of this diversity, multiculturalism makes sure that the value and dignity of all citizens regardless of their group affiliations, such as racial or ethnic origins, their language, or their religious affiliations, are safeguarded. Thus, multiculturalism cogitates on the cultural and ethnic diversity, and ensures the freedom of all the members to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage.

There are many issues in and around multiculturalism. For instance, there are questions such as how equal recognition would be given to all cultural communities living together as well as competing with one another? How to treat all individual members within a community equally? How to treat all the communities equally? What are the appropriate institutional arrangements for maintaining such equal
treatment? And what would be the role of the State in dealing with all such problems?

Here, in this chapter, I try to take up certain aspects, not all, of multiculturalism, starting from what it really means by multiculturalism? The two other important questions I attempt to address here are: what would be the response of multiculturalism in contexts where a large number of ethnic minority communities are living together and competing with one another? And what could be the principles on which multicultural policies of equal treatment should be based?

**Multiculturalism: The Road to Equal Concern**

'Diversity', perhaps, can be the most suitable term to characterize the present social structure of any given society. If truth be told, most 'nation-states' are multinational in character, having diverse cultural and ethnic communities. This diversity has a specific significance vis-à-vis the liberal state policies. Though the liberal society is tolerant of differences, it is actually committed to certain values and cannot tolerate every cultural practice. In regard to this diversity, two specific questions that liberal states face are worth mentioning. First, how can a liberal state make policies in a way that it can promote the desired liberal ethos in the society and at the same time promote important cultural values of diverse communities? The significance of the question lies in the fact that on the one hand liberal society is committed to certain values and cannot

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1 May need to mention few words here about the literature on the subject (multiculturalism). Theorists of multiculturalism like Kymlicka are of the view that there is a 'possible convergence in the recent literature on ideas of liberal multiculturalism'. Accordingly, this view has arguably become the dominant position in the literature today, and most debates are about how to develop and refine the liberal culturalist position, rather than whether to accept it in the first place. But this view has been often counterpoised by critics saying that in certain ways this view is misleading and it is far from being the case. See Will Kymlicka, 1998, 'Introduction, An Emerging Consensus?' *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 1, p 147. And also see for the counterpoised argument Brian Barry, 2001, *Culture and Equality*, Polity, Blackwell Publishers Ltd. p. 6.

tolerate every cultural practice, and on the other hand, there are numerous cultural communities with diverse and distinct cultural practices they wish to preserve. Thus, in reality all the cultural practices cannot be promoted equally. Therefore the issue of 'limits of diversity' comes up. Now, the question is - how should liberal societies determine the range of possible diversity?

The second question emerges again from the problem of diversity. This is in regard to the conflicts among or between different communities within the nation-state. This question seems identical with the first but not, in fact. It is not necessarily a question of conflict between liberal social values and diverse cultural community practices. Rather, it is more about conflict between the existing communities within the society. Thus, the question is 'how to treat all the communities equally and fairly?' Simply put, promoting a universal liberal value acceptable to all is one, and treating them (diverse communities) as equal is another. Conflicts in a multi-ethnic society cannot be overcome by simply providing a common liberal value, it also needs certain policies which recognize distinct cultural values thereby giving differentiated autonomy to each community. Essentially, this is the way and means of accommodating all the diverse cultural communities within society and ensuring that distinct ways of life survive and are not compelled to assimilate into the majority culture. Liberal states have to make policies accordingly within its larger framework so that the members of the state are treated equally. Again accommodating all the communities entails giving equal respect to the diverse cultural values of each particular community.

Nonetheless, there may be problems in accommodating all the diverse communities fairly as every cultural community has a distinct

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These liberal values are talked about especially by Carens, Joseph in his *Culture, Citizenship and Community: A Contextual Exploration of Justice as Evenhandedness*, Oxford University Press, Spring, 2000, and Bikhu Parekh in his 'What is Multiculturalism', Seminar, December, 1999.
culture and history, and structures its time and space in different ways. If I use the words of Bikhu Parekh, neither all units of time, be it hours, days, weeks, months or years, nor all units of space, be they streets, buildings, town or land, are or ever can be culturally neutral. They are suffused with deep meanings and carry different kinds and degrees of moral and emotional significance. As such, "no society can avoid being biased against the practices of, and thus discriminating against its cultural minorities".4

Multiculturalism, thus, is a kind of movement that envisages a society in which all the diverse communities live together with equal dignity and concern. It cherishes cultural diversity and gives importance to particularities of each community. It is a supplement to the liberal democratic view of equality by providing the option of group specific rights for vulnerable communities. The main argument here is that the so called 'equality' in society cannot be brought about by merely providing equal rights to all individuals regardless of his/her community membership. Individual should not be seen as an atomized unit in society who needs some separate space for his/her life but also as a member of a certain community whose values are different from other communities and also important for their own lives. Thus, on the one hand, individuals need separate space of freedom, and on the other hand, there is need for considering community membership of each individual. Thus, promoting equality in the society entails consideration of both the values.

Multiculturalism is not simply a reaction against the liberal individualist notion of equality but a supplement to that notion by providing prospect of group specific rights. Thus, justice, according to multiculturalism, would involve not only giving individuals equal rights but also equal recognition of the values of all diverse communities. Thus,

within the discourse of multiculturalism, ‘minorities’ are seen, not as a problem to be solved or a threat to be neutralized, but as legitimate members of the State whose identity and culture must be respected. It “represents a new kind of universalism - one where integration of individual into the State is predicted not on a total disengagement from participating community ties. Rather, people are included into the nation-state as members of diverse but equal ethnic groups”.

It all exhibits the importance of community membership of individuals. In fact multiculturalism is more about promoting a complex but necessary network of equality involving three nodes - individuals, groups and the State. On the one hand, there are individuals who need personal space for attainment of their goals in life. On the other hand, there are communities that influence behavior of the individuals in many respects. Again, there is State, which is not neutral but has a cultural orientation towards the majority community. So, equality, as multiculturalism views, involves striking a harmonized relationship between these three nodes of human social networks.

As Bikhu Parekh opined, a multicultural perspective is made of the productive interplay of three essential insights, namely, the cultural embeddedness of individuals, the inevitability and desirability of cultural plurality, and the plural and multicultural constitution of each culture. Since individuals grow up and dwell in societies which are culturally structured and also fashion their lives and social relations in terms of a culturally derived system of meaning and significance, culture becomes a very integral part of human life. Naturally, thus, many aspects of life are deeply influenced by it. This does not mean that individuals are so profoundly influenced by their culture that they are unable to rise above its categories of thought and critically evaluate its values and system of meaning. It means that they “can overcome some but not all of its

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influences, and necessarily view the world from within a culture, be it the one they have inherited and uncritically accepted or reflectively revised or, in rare cases, the one they have consciously adopted".6 Significantly, there are a number of cultures representing different system of meaning and vision of good life. This plurality of cultures has its own importance in the sense that one needs other cultures to help understand itself better, expands its intellectual and moral horizon, and stretches its imagination, save it from narcissism to guard it against the obvious temptation to absolutise itself, and so on. It will be wrong to say, however, that one cannot lead a good life within one’s own culture. It simply means that one’s way of life is likely to be richer if one also enjoys access to others’. In one sense the culturally self-contained life is virtually impossible for most human beings in the modern, mobile and interdependent world. It also means that no culture is wholly worthless. All of them deserve at least some respect because of what they mean to their members and the creative energy they display. We should also understand that “every culture is internally plural and reflects a continuing conversation between its different traditions and strands of thought”7. That means that the identities of cultures are plural, fluid and open. They grow out of interactions with each other, define their identity in terms of what they take to be their significant other, and are at least partially multicultural in their origins and constitutions.

Simply put, modern nations-states are composed of a variety of cultural identities, which are incommensurable in terms of their values. Nevertheless, in modern democratic politics State is usually identified with the majority culture, while the communities that differ from it, are designated as minorities. Analyzing the western liberal democracies, advocates of multiculturalism argue that in these multi-ethnic and multi-national societies, minority cultures and communities are

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7Ibid.
disadvantaged through the cultural orientation and practices of the nation-state. The policy of the State favors, at least implicitly, the majority and at the same time places the minority communities at disadvantage. This disadvantage is a source of injustice which can be termed as "cultural injustice". This cultural injustice is excogitated in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. This is what Nancy Frazer tries to show through her examples of cultural domination "(being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien and/or hostile to one's own); non-recognition (being rendered invisible via the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices of one's culture); and disrespect (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions)". Many political theorists have given due concern about such injustice too. Charles Taylor argues that "non-recognition or misrecognition can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, reduced mode of being. Beyond simple lack of respect, it can inflict a grievous wound, saddling people with crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy but a vital human need". In this regard commend of Axel Honneth has some important points. It is said that we owe our "integrity" to the receipt of approval or recognition from other persons. Negative concepts such as 'insult' or 'degradation' are related to forms of disrespect, to the denial of endorsement. 

Frazer, op.cit. The arguments put forth by different sections of the societies will support these cases. For example, many of the feminists have argued that in patriarchal societies they (women) have been induced to adopt a depreciatory image of themselves. They have interiorized a picture of their own inferiority. Thus, even when some of the obstacles to their advancement fall away, they may be incapable of taking advantage of the new opportunities. And beyond this they are condemned to suffer the pains of low self-esteem. Same thing can be said of the blacks. White society has for generations projected a demeaning image of them. Their own self-depreciation becomes one of the most potent instruments of their own oppression. It is said that their first task ought to be to purge themselves of this imposed and destructive identity. A similar point is being made in relation to indigenous and colonized people in general. It is held that since 1492 Europeans have projected them as somehow inferior, "uncivilized", and through the force of conquest have often been able to impose this image on the conquered. These examples are from Charles Taylor, Politics of Recognition.

recognition. They are used to characterize a form of behavior that does not represent an injustice solely because it constrains the subjects in their freedom for action or does them harm. “Rather such behavior is injurious because it impairs these persons in their positive understanding of self – an understanding acquired by intersubjective means”.

Thus, it will be not surprising to say that today it is widely recognized that States must come to terms with the enduring reality of ethnic and religious cleavages, and find new ways of accommodating and respecting diversity. Kymlicka points out that the pursuit of national homogenization often leads to resistance amongst ethnic and religious minorities – indeed to violence, secessionist movements, and even civil war – in countries like the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, China, Burma, Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, to name a few in Asia. As a result, throughout South and East Asia, countries are now debating, and adopting new policies to accommodate minorities, from the recognition of indigenous rights in the Philippines to regional autonomy in Indonesia and China, to multinational federalism in Sri Lanka and India. This is now often described as a key ingredient in any process of democratization.


11Will Kymlicka & Baogang He (ed.), 2005, Multiculturalism in Asia, p.1. It will be interesting to mention some other forms of sub-state nationalism in other countries as mentioned by Kymlicka in the same book. There are many other forms of sub-state nationalism like the ones of Quebecois in Canada, the Scots and Welsh in Britain, the Catalans and Basques in Spain, the Flemish in Belgium, the Germans in South Tyrol in Italy, and Puerto Ricans in the United States. In all of these cases too, we find a regionally concentrated group that conceives of itself as a nation within a larger state, and mobilizes behind nationalist political parties to achieve recognition of its nationhood, either in the form of an independent state or through territorial autonomy within the larger state. In the past, all these countries have attempted to suppress these forms of sub-state nationalism. To have a regional group with a sense of distinct nationhood was seen as a threat to the state. Various efforts were made to erode this sense of distinct nationhood, including restricting minority language rights, abolishing traditional forms of regional self government, and encouraging members of the dominant group to settle in the minority group’s homeland so that the minority becomes outnumbered even in its traditional territory. However, there has been a dramatic change in the way Western countries deal with sub-state nationalisms. Today all the countries just mentioned have accepted the principle that these sub-state national identities will endure into the indefinite future, and that their sense of nationhood and nationalist aspirations must be accommodated in some way or other. See article of Kymlicka in this book, p.23.
It is not surprising, therefore, that multiculturalism, locates cultural identity as a source of discrimination in society. While protesting against systemic discrimination, theorists of multiculturalism grant positive value to cultural diversity. The presence of diverse cultures enriches social life. So, State should respect the diverse cultures. And respect of diversity implies equal space and opportunity for different cultures to sustain themselves and, therefore remedying minority discrimination entails policies that ensure full and equal membership to all communities within the state. This may, at times, “require special consideration or even collective rights for vulnerable minorities who have been the victims of forced assimilation and exclusion”\(^\text{12}\). This will create a more integrated society. “As minorities receive institutional representation and their culture survive and flourish, they will develop a sense of belonging and commitment to the state.”\(^\text{13}\)

**Liberal Incertitude: Questioning Multiculturalism**

Some liberals have questioned the multicultural policy of providing group rights collectively to the minority community as being inconsistent with the liberal belief in equal or identical treatment. The reason behind such claim is that cultural community based group rights do not create equality but strengthen discrimination within the community. They often ask why should the members of certain groups have rights regarding land, language, representation, etc. that the members of other groups do not have? Gurpreet Mahajan analyses “While postmodernist upholding the politics of difference and minorities struggling for a voice in national political life find a natural ally in multiculturalism, liberals fear that multicultural political strategies would strengthen community conflicts

\(^\text{12}\)Gurpreet Mahajan ‘Rethinking Multiculturalism; Seminar, December 1999, p. 58.

and pose a challenge to national unity". Arguing that the achievements of the enlightenment, such as the universal citizenship, have far more capabilities of promoting ‘justice’ in the societies, liberals contend that the ‘multiculturalists have the presupposition of contrast between “identical treatment” and “equitable treatment”. In advocating the “reintroduction of a mass of special legal statuses in place of the single status of uniform citizenship that was the achievement of the enlightenment, multiculturalists seem remarkably insouciant about the abuses and inequities of the ancient regime which provoked the attacks on it by the encyclopaedists and their allies. It is not so much a case of reinventing the wheel as forgetting why the wheel was invented and advocating the reintroduction of the sledge”.

It is also argued that the proliferation of “special interests” fostered by multiculturalism is, furthermore, conducive to a politics of ‘divide and rule’ that can only benefit those who benefit most from the status quo. There is better way of heading off the nightmare of unified political action by the economically disadvantaged that might issue in common demands than to set different groups of the disadvantaged against one another. Diverting attention away from shared disadvantages such as unemployment, poverty, low-quality housing and inadequate public services is an obvious long-term anti-egalitarian objective. Anything that emphasizes the particularity of each group’s problems at the expense of a focus on the problems they share with others is thus to be welcomed. If the political effort is dissipated in pressing for and defending special group privileges, it will not be available for mobilization on the basis of broader shared interests.

The feminists too are anxious that protection granted to cultural community practices may obliterate the gains that the women’s

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15Barry, op.cit. p. 11.
16Ibid.
movement has so far achieved. Since most cultures approve and even permit control over women by men, preserving cultural practices may well become another way of allowing patriarchal domination in society. Groups rights may, thus, assist in the continued subordination of women.17

Liberals, therefore argue that cultural values can be better promoted by individual rights. They outrightly reject the idea that cultural specific group rights will further the principle of equality. Chandran Kukathas opined “if rights were to be given to the disadvantaged, they should go to them regardless of group membership”.18 He also argues that group rights could not be defended successfully from the standpoint of liberal equality, the reason being that groups are not made up of equal persons and not all members of a group are unequal to all those outside it. “To treat the group as a whole as “less equal” to those outside with respect to, say, resources, would violate liberal equality to the extent that some group members are, in fact, better endowed with resources than some outsiders...we give individuals rather than groups the right because we seek to protect the interest of individuals rather than groups; if we are concerned about equality, it is about equality among individuals rather than among groups and we then give all individuals the same rights”.19 Basically, what Kukathas says is that the claim for group rights weakens the case of liberal equality.

The other reason on which liberal criticism of minority rights is based on is that these group rights reinforced power hierarchy within the group. There are cultural practices, which deny the individual members of the community “the right to associate with outsiders and deny education”.20 Kukathas gives the example of “shunning” or in extreme

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19Ibid.
20Ibid.
cases “banishing” those members who have violated community norms. The argument being that multicultural policy will only strengthen such deprivation rather than creating equality. This was the view Aylet Shachar also advanced. Multiculturalism represents a problem, however, when state policies of accommodation intended to mitigate the power differential between groups, end up reinforcing power hierarchies within them. “This phenomenon points to the troubling fact that some categories of at-risk group members are being asked to shoulder a disproportionate share of the cost of multiculturalism. Under such conditions, well meaning accommodation by the state may have certain group members vulnerable to maltreatment within the group, and may, in effect, work to reinforce some of the most hierarchical elements of a culture”.21 Shachar termed this phenomenon “the paradox of multicultural vulnerability”.

Thus, liberals find some tensions between multicultural policy and universal citizenship. In fact, liberals want to submit that group specific minority rights are inherently in conflict with individual rights. The new emphasis on ‘human rights’ would resolve cultural conflicts. Rather than protecting vulnerable groups directly, through special rights for the members of designated groups, cultural minorities would be protected indirectly, by granting basic civil and political rights to all individuals regardless of group membership. Basic human rights such as freedom of speech, association and conscience, while attributed to individuals are typically exercise in community with others and so provided protection for group life. Where these individual rights are firmly protected, liberals assume, no further rights are needed to attribute to the members of specific ethnic or national minorities.

Thus, it is reasoned that multicultural policies are not in general well designed to advance the value of liberty and equality, and that the

implementation of such policies tends to mark a retreat from both. Even when there are reasons for introducing group-differentiated rights based on membership in cultural groups, these do not include the advancement of equal liberty. Rather, the case has to be that these are departures from equal liberty that can be supported pragmatically.

Debating against the theories of multiculturalism and the multicultural policies adopted in countries like Canada, Brian Barry alleges that whether the exponents of multiculturalism like it or not, no country has so far departed very far from the model of ‘common citizenship rights’. What tends to be forgotten is that the problems thrown up by a uniform system of liberal laws have been relatively few. In contrast, it is claimed that the ‘politics of difference’ is a “formula for manufacturing conflict, because it rewards the groups that can most effectively mobilize to make claims on the polity, or at any rate it rewards ethno-cultural-political entrepreneurs who can exploits its potential for their own ends by mobilizing a constituency around a set of national demands”.22 In response to Will Kymlicka’s argument that the earlier model of a unitary republican citizenship, in which all citizens share the identical set of common citizenship rights was originally developed in the context of much more homogenous political communities, and this earlier model can be updated to deal with issues of ethnocultural diversity,23 Barry argues that this model of citizenship was developed in response to the wars of religion that made much of the Europe a living hell in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries. “If it could bring those conflicts to an end – and on the whole it did – it is not at all apparent why it should be up to the task of coping with religious and cultural differences now”.24

24 Barry,op.cit.
There are many other arguments against multiculturalism. For instance, Daniel I. O'Neill uses the Rushdie affair to critique the work of Will Kymlicka, Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer, three of the most important contemporary political philosophers writing on issues of multiculturalism. The article argues that Kymlicka's defense of "multicultural citizenship" is deeply problematic from the perspective of the Rushdie affair. It then considers Taylor and Walzer similarly, as representatives of the communitarian strain of multicultural liberal argument, and likewise finds their positions unconvincing. Daniel I. O'Neill suggests that the Rushdie affair points to a potentially irresolvable tension at the heart of all three attempts to defend multicultural liberalism.25

Rejoinder to Liberals: Clearing Misapprehension

Many of the questions thrown up by the liberals against multiculturalists carry academic importance. The opposers to the movement of multiculturalism often extract not only the ambiguity in the theoretical spectra but also manage to flack the practical loopholes in the institutions that are experimented with under the 'multicultural policies'. However, not all such intimations are true and some of them are misleading. Therefore, it is necessary for the supporters of multiculturalism to respond to such accusations. To begin with, one such misleading idea about 'multiculturalism' is the claim by the liberals that the very word 'multiculturalism' plays a corrupting role in the contemporary discourse. It is said that it has built into it the idea that the basis of all social groups is cultural and this assumption does a lot of work but "is in many instances simply bad anthropology".26 Thus, theorists of multiculturalism have been accused of distorting the essence

26Barry, op.cit.
of groups by defining them so that their basis must be some distinctive cultural identity rather than some other distinguishing features.\textsuperscript{27}

Let me very briefly reflect on this issue of the meaning of the term ‘group’ often referred to by multiculturalists. It will be wrong to say that the basis of all groups is cultural, even if some imply this, they need to refine that. No one will disagree with Barry when he says that ‘national’ identity may or may not be based on a sense of cultural distinctiveness: and the demand for a degree of national autonomy may or may not be bound up with the desire to control the institutions responsible for cultural reproduction, such as the schools and the media, so as to ensure the perpetuation of the national culture\textsuperscript{28}. Multiculturalism, however, tries to deal with those cultural and ethnic groups which have distinct cultural attributes like language, religion, tradition, custom, and other provenances and practices like festivals, important days, etc. That is why most of the theorists of multiculturalism often use terms like “ethnic”, “cultural communities” or to some extent “racial group”.\textsuperscript{29}

These groups which can be together called ‘cultural groups’ (since there is lack of a common and universally acceptable terminology), are different from other groups like those based on ‘class’, or those based on certain common interest but not culture. It is not that other groups are not important, rather it means that these cultural based groups in their relationship with one another often lead to conflict and this conflict cannot be simply resolved by providing policies for equal economic opportunities or universal rights. As they are essentially cultural based, they need to be dealt with by recognizing their distinct group identities. It should be noted that cultural identities are not something which can be

\textsuperscript{27}Barry, op.cit., 21-22.

\textsuperscript{28}One important reason for such confusion is lack of proper definition of terms like ‘group’. We need, therefore, to define categorically all important terms including ‘ethnic groups’, ‘national groups’, ‘tribes’ or even ‘culture’. These groups need to be differentiated from other groups whose problems can be resolved simply by providing universal equal citizenship or ‘redistribution’ strategies.

\textsuperscript{29}Even the term “ethno-racial groups” is used. See David Hollinger, 1995, Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism, Basic Books, New York.
easily dissolved in market economies or liberal democracies. And so far it is not contrary to the general expectation. That is why multiculturalism cherishes cultural diversity and envisions a society in which “different communities forge a common identity while retaining their cultural provenance”.30

The greatest mistake of liberals, in arguing that multicultural policy is in conflict with liberal concern of equal citizenship is that they put multiculturalism and ‘equal citizenship’ on opposite sides. In other words, they assume that there is some sort of tensions between the two. This is, however, not the case. There is a symbiotic relationship between the two. Multiculturalism should be seen as an additional means to enhance the condition of equal citizenship, which liberals are desperately looking for. The ultimate goal is to integrate individuals into the State or to set the conditions required to have that ‘universalism’, Mahajan talked about. Multiculturalism should not be construed as a movement that is entirely against the “universal citizenship” or even against “enlightenment project”.31 What is being attempted under multiculturalism is to show that in societies where there are a number of cultural groups, the institutions of universal citizenship often fail to reconcile different interests of diverse communities. Therefore, the earlier model of a unitary republican citizenship rights should be qualified by acknowledging the value of distinct cultures. These unitary citizenship rights were, in fact, developed in the context of a much more homogenous political community. Now we need to deal with

31The core of this conception of citizenship, already worked out in the Eighteenth century, is that there should be only one status of citizen (no estates or caste), so that everybody enjoys the same legal and political rights. These rights should be assigned to individual citizens, with no special rights (or disabilities) accorded to some and not others on the basis of groups membership. In the course of the Nineteenth century, the limitations of this conception of equality came under fire with increasing intensity from ‘new liberals’ and socialists. In response, liberal citizenship has, especially in this century, come to be supplemented by the addition of social and economic elements. Universalism (categorical entitlements and social insurance) replaced the old law, which targeted only those with no other means of support; and the removal of legal prohibitions on occupational advancement was supplemented by a more positive ideal of ‘equality of opportunity’. See for details Barry, 2001, p7.
heterogeneous, culturally plural societies and in dealing with such societies we need provisions which recognize distinct cultural values of each ethnic groups. In other words, in the contemporary conditions of cultural heterogeneity, “classical” or “difference blind” liberal principles fail to deliver much needed ‘equality’ and ‘justice’.32

As Will Kymlicka says cultural membership is important for every individual and the context of choice, which is a primary condition for individual liberty, is provided by cultural membership, and the range of option in our life is determined by our cultural heritage. As such the special status for minority community given to promote their culture is not inconsistent with the liberal view of equal concern. “Cultural membership is important in pursuing our essential interest in leading a good life, and so consideration of that membership is an important part of having equal consideration for the interest of each member of the community”.33

To cut the long story short, ‘recognition’ of cultural values that characterize ‘identity’ of a community is a key to success, and an essential component of democracy. One needs to respect the ‘identity’ of others. Charles Taylor, deriving from Hegel’s idea of dialogical construction of identity, hints at the importance of identity and its recognition. Thus, it is said that discovering one’s own identity does not mean that one works it out in isolation, but one negotiates it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internalized, with others. That is why the development of an ideal of inwardly-generated identity gives a new and crucial importance to recognition. One’s identity crucially depends on one’s dialogical relations with others. Thus, Taylor says “the importance

32It is perhaps necessary to clarify an important point Brian Barry has made in this regard. He said that Kymlicka denies that the earlier model of unitary republican citizenship can be updated to deal with issues of ethnocultural diversity (Barry, 2001, p. 21). The analysis on the relationship between the unitary republican citizenship and the group differentiated rights will be clearer in the following paragraphs. For the time being it will suffice to say that most multiculturalists do not deny the importance of individual rights.

of recognition is now universally recognized in one form or another; on an intimate plane, we are all aware how identity can be formed and or malformed in our contact with significant others. On the social plane, we have a continuing politics of recognition. Both have been shaped by the growing ideal of authenticity, and recognition plays an essential role in the culture that has arisen around it.\textsuperscript{34}

Perhaps it is important to mention at this juncture that many people have criticized multiculturalism as the latter seems to concern exclusively with minority ethnic communities. This is an important point that deserves a reasonable discussion because this criticism is not totally unfounded. Such a view of multiculturalism comes from the account of the majority-minority relationship presented by multiculturalists. Most of the multiculturalists including Will Kymlicka, in the their construction of discourses on multiculturalism, focus on majority-minority relationship in which minorities are placed in a disadvantaged position and so they justify special rights for the minorities for rectifying such a condition. In the process they simply overlook the problems faced by communities within the mainstream. Thus, Walker has to say that the question of cultural vulnerability in the late twentieth century is considerably more complicated than the picture of weak ethnic minorities locked outside the "culturally vibrant majority culture".\textsuperscript{35} The sense of cultural precariousness is a very widespread sensation in the late twentieth century much more common than multiculturalists' account would lead people to believe. The swift institutional changes of advanced modernity have brought about deep shifts in most major institutions and thus in the infrastructure for personal identity and autonomy.\textsuperscript{36} Entire ways of life have been wiped out and the underpinnings of many traditions have

\textsuperscript{34}Taylor, op.cit., p.6.
been knocked away. Thus, it is said that “this has rendered the problems of cultural vulnerability a very widespread one, not only for minorities, but for most individuals in the mainstream as well”.

Walker even writes about some of the mainstream cultures which have undergone intense disruption within recent memories to support his contention. Out of these examples, he singles out two “mainstream cultures” namely “culture of the family farm” and “urban neighborhoods”. It is said that these are two examples of non-ethnic cultures (institutional complexes which supply the repertoires of meaning and guidance which Kymlicka focuses on) which face serious threat within conditions of advanced modernity. They can stand as representatives of the much broader range of institutions whose importance, Walker says, Kymlicka ignores. So the point Walker wants to bring home is that many different groups in society fight for the resources required for maintaining their identity from generation to generation. If Kymlicka’s argument that we should look on culture as a primary good is valid, “then surely all the groups which are

37 Walker, op.cit.

38 Let me explain very briefly Walker’s explanation of these two ‘cultures’. His idea is that for millennia, most people lived an agricultural life, which had its own folklore and culture, with knowledge and narratives passed down from generation to generation. But, within recent memory the developments of agribusiness and of new agricultural technologies have rendered family farms impracticable and almost all but a tiny percentage of them are gone. The pain of urbanization entailed with the loss of family farms was acute for many of the people who experienced it, causing great dislocation and disorientation. For those whose meanings and structures of sensibility were determined by the rounds of farm life, urbanization was a form of assimilation. It marked the loss of a rich culture, and generations of people were cast adrift in a foreign world. The disappearance of the family farm marked the death of a life-way and of a structure of sensibility. For the “urban neighborhood culture”, Walker says that neighborhood plays a crucial role as carriers of culture. They solidify a sense of identity and they serve as a site for groups to create a sense of community and security in a frequently hostile environment. This is particularly true for vulnerable minorities such as immigrants, gays and lesbians, and so on. Neighborhoods also play a crucial role for the poor. But in advanced capitalist societies, with their relentless emphasis on growth, homes and neighborhoods face constant pressures from gratification, urban renewal and real estate speculation. Homes and neighborhoods come to be seen primarily in terms of their exchange value, and those who see them as a cherished space of identity are forced to capitulate in the face of market forces. Walker agrees with William Julius Wilson and others who have traced the resulting decay of crucial cultural neighborhood institutions such as churches and schools, stores and recreational facilities. As basic institutions decline, the social organization of inner-city neighborhoods (sense of community, positive neighborhood identification, and explicit norms and sanctions against aberrant behavior) likewise declined. Thus the decay of urban neighborhood erodes the bonds of cultural membership and the background conditions of autonomy. See Peter F. Drucker, 1994, ‘The Age of Social Transformation’, The Atlantic Monthly, November, pp. 54-55. Also William Julius Wilson, 1987, The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, The Underclass, and Public Policy, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
threatened with the loss of cultural stability should be the focus of our concern. What justifies narrowing the focus onto the identity claims of ethnic groups?"39

To take another argument advanced by liberals against multiculturalism, merely giving equal rights to all individuals regardless of his/her community membership to fulfill the aim of equal concern is also problematic. This is a mistaken view because liberal democratic States cannot be truly neutral with respect to culture. Joseph Careens argues that for liberal democracy to work properly and to endure over time, certain norms, attitudes, and disposition must be widely shared among the population. Thus, he says that liberal democracies required a liberal democratic political culture. To quote him,

"this political culture is not neutral because it fits better with some ways of life and conception of the good man than with others. The liberal democratic culture required to sustain liberal democratic institutions is a genesis culture, not a specific one. In this sense, every liberal democracy has the same cultural prerequisites... while every liberal democratic regime is inevitably culturally specific, one that has been particularly emphasized by Will Kymlicka in his important work, 'Multicultural Citizenship.' Kymlicka's key argument against an unqualified version of liberal neutrality towards culture is that every State will have to choose what language to use for official business, how to draw internal political boundaries, and what powers to assign to sub-units. Such choices have important implications for specific identities and culture within the State. The choice of one language rather than another can never be regarded as culturally neutral, even if it is inevitable."40 Since this cultural particularism is inevitable, it is to be accepted only when unavoidable and to be avoided as much as possible. He

39Walker, op.cit
further opines, “the guiding idea of evenhandedness is that what fairness entails is a sensitive balancing of competing claims for recognition and support in matters of culture and identity. Instead of trying to abstract from particularity, we should embrace it, but in a way that is fair to all the different particularities”.41

It will be proper to mention what Kymlicka has to say on the matter. “The problem is not that traditional human rights doctrine gives us the wrong answer to these questions. It is rather that they often give no answer at all. The right to free speech does not tell us what is an appropriate language policy; the right to vote does not tell us how political boundaries should be drawn, how powers should be distributed between levels of government; the right to mobility does not tell us what is an appropriate immigration and naturalization policy. These questions have been left to the unusual process of majoritarianism decision-making within each state. The reason has been to render cultural minorities vulnerable to significant injustice at the hands of the majority and to exacerbate ethno-cultural conflict. To resolve these questions fairly, we need to supplement traditional human rights principles with a theory of minority rights.”42

Finally, I would like to turn to two points frequently raised by the liberal. One, on the nomenclature chipped in by them, and two, on the politicization of ethnicity. Most liberals (and those who oppose multiculturalism) term the whole design of multiculturalism as “culturalism”.43 This is totally a misnomer. Unfortunately, no one from amongst the multiculturalists has so far reflected on the given ‘name’. Let me start the discussion. Multiculturalism connotes two issues; one, importance of cultural membership of individuals and the necessity to

42Kymlicka, 1989, p. 45.
recognize cultural differences, and two, conflict between and among different cultural groups and prescription of institutions to deal with such conflicts. The first involves refinement of liberal project of universal citizenship so that the role of cultural differences is well recognized within the liberal paradigm. This could mean to some extent the theoretical position aimed at justifying devolution of State powers to members of cultural groups so that they might maintain the integrity of their cultures, their customs and languages and the practices which make up their way of life. But it is not only the importance of culture or identity of groups that multiculturalism attempts to showcase. Over and above this, it tries to canvass the existing ethnic conflicts among distinct cultural groups by examining causes of such conflict and suggesting normative institutions to bring to an end (or rather minimize) the problems developed out of such conflicts. If we use the term "culturalism" as suggested by some, the whole project of multiculturalism would mean only the first. The term "multi-culturalism" denotes the plural existence of distinct cultural communities in the so-called modern "nation-state". It also suggests that there are problems of conflict between and among cultural groups within the nation state if this plurality is not well maintained. Thus, it is not only the importance of culture (which culturalism would mean) that multiculturalism implies but also the necessity of building that environment in which the diverse cultural communities live together with "equal respect and concern".

Now, let me come to the contention about the politicization of ethnicity. It is true that there are issues of politicization of ethnicity in the sense that sometimes there are cases in which leaders of ethnic groups mobilize people in the name of identity and difference for their political gains. However, this is not a sufficient ground for rejecting multicultural movements. This will be clear from my study of the cases in the Northeast India (Chapters 3 & 4). Thus, it will be wrong to say that the proliferation of special interests fostered by multiculturalism is
conducive to a politics of 'divide and rule' that can only benefit those who benefit most from the status quo.44 Such a kind of view leads people (like Brian Barry) to believe that the whole problem of multiculturalism would be solved by provisions of employment, poverty alleviation, better housing, adequate public services, etc. Even Barry remarks that "diverting attention away from shared disadvantages such as unemployment, poverty, low-quality housing and inadequate public services is an obvious long-term anti-egalitarian objective".45

However, in reality one of the important causal factors that contribute to the turmoil in many corners of the globe, especially in culturally heterogeneous societies, is the conflict between different cultural groups. It is not that the societies which inhabit plural cultures necessarily lead to violence, rather various factors such as pursuit of 'national homogenization', or 'inequality' between groups often caused to develop 'resistance movements', secessionist movements leading to violence, and even civil war.46 These issues in multicultural societies have been conceptualized in many forms. Thus, it has been one of the most debated topics in the present academic world. Although, there are contextual differences in terms of the nature of ethnic relationship or kinds of existing ethnic groups or demands made by different ethnic groups, one widely accepted understanding is the reality of ethnic and religious cleavages, and the need to find ways of accommodating and respecting diversity in multicultural societies. Since it is not so easy to understand this reality of ethnic and religious segmentations in different societies, and also to find ways of accommodating and respecting diversity, one needs serious contextual study of multicultural societies. It is because of the fact that it is impossible to have a 'universal law/

44 Barry, op.cit, pp. 11-12.
45 Ibid. I will come back to this issue in the final chapter when I study possible strategy of resolving ethnic crises. There I will study importance of 'recognition' and 'redistribution' in such circumstances
46 Many terms and concepts have been constructed to denote such phenomena in multicultural societies. In order to minimize the complexity of these terms, I simply call it "ethnic conflicts".
theory' which can be applied across the board. Two of the main objectives of my thesis are also to study and understand the nature of diversity, inter-community relationship, and ethnic conflict in the Northeastern region of Indian union, so that ways of accommodating and respecting diversity in this region could be suggested.

Testing Multicultural Institutional Frameworks

Now the important question bothering all social scientists is 'how to resolve such conflicts between different communities? Theorists who deal with such problems in western liberal societies suggest two options- i) The Western model of multination federation, and ii) Consociation democracy.

A multination federation adopts a form of government that grants significant territorial autonomy to several national minorities. This kind of territorial autonomy cannot be considered in the Indian context specially that of Manipur. Although a certain amount of autonomy should be given to all ethnic communities, it cannot be in the form of territorial autonomy. It can be in the form of cultural autonomy, which enables them to organize and administer their own publicly funded schools in their own mother tongue, to establish newspapers and media, to address the organs of government, etc. It may be in the form of what Otto Bauer’s non-territorial autonomy in the old Halsburg Empire.47

Again we may look at consociational democracy as an option. Arend Lajphart elucidates how consociational democracy explains the political stability of Australia, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. In his classic study, Lajphart identified the critical elements of the consociational experiments: A) Government by a grand coalition of all significant segments; B) A mutual veto or “concurrent majority” voting rule for some or all issues, C) Proportionality as the principle for

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allocating political representation, public funds, and civil service positions; and D) Considerable amount of autonomy for various segments of the society to govern their internal affairs.

This kind of government of grand coalition of all significant segments with mutual veto power is possible and perhaps successful in the countries where there are few (not many) ethnic groups of more or less equal size. However, it will be very hard to think of a consociational democracy in a State, which is divided into too many smaller ethnic groups. Especially, the provision of veto powers will not work in such a context. Because if each of the groups has veto power; it will be very difficult to have a decision on any matters. So, the best possible option is to have certain kind of arrangement or mechanism to develop consensus among these various groups. And the most important question is that without a veto power system how can a minority group protects its autonomy.48

Problematising Multiculturalism in Indian Context

The question 'why do we need policies of recognition?' is, I hope, almost settled.49 This will be more apparent in the following chapters. There is, however, another problem incensing diversity. This is related to the nature of ethnic/cultural diversity in different context and the kinds of...

48Professor Sten of the Uppsala University even suggested me to look at the option of 'polyarchy'. Interaction dated 16-5-07 at Department of Government and Politics, Uppsala University, Sweden. However, polyarchy, as formulated by Robert Dahl, is infeasible in this context. What Dahl means by polyarchy is not more than a modern representative democracy of liberal paradigm. Seven most important institution under polyarchy, as mentioned by Dahl are; control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in elected officials; elected officials are chosen and peacefully removed in frequent, fair, and free elections in which coercion is absent or quite limited; virtually all adults have the right to vote; most adults also have the right to run for public offices in these elections; citizen possesses a right, effectively enforced by judicial and administrative officials, to freedom of expression, including criticism of and opposition to the leaders and party in office; they have access, and an effectively enforced right to gain access, to sources of information that are not monopolized by the government of the state, or by any other single group; they possess an effectively enforced right to form and join political organizations, including political parties and interest groups. There is hardly any explicit institution for minority protection or due arrangements for promoting equality among or between cultural groups. See Robert A. Dahl, 1997, Modern Political Analysis (Fifth Edition), Prentice Hall of India Private Limited, New Delhi.

rights each community demands. We need to address this problem because of two specific reasons. First, the nature of diversity and relationship between diverse communities in a society may be different from other societies. And the demand made by one particular community is different from that of the other. Many of the Asian societies, for instance, have their own traditions of peaceful co-existence amongst linguistic, religion and ethnic groups. Secondly, most of the studies done so far are concerned mainly with the western liberal societies in which major concern is given to majority-minority relationship. Therefore, there is a need to explore such problems in other context too.

Usually, as hinted earlier, the concern for diversity is reduced to the issue of accommodating minorities within the State. In other words, the focus is on the dominance of the majority. As mentioned at the beginning, most of the earlier theories on multiculturalism referred to matters concerning majority-minority conflicts. In that sense, they were linked to the protection of minority groups in the region. However, there are cases in which the whole problem cannot be reduced to only minority-majority relationship. The issue here is about a sort of contest among various minority groups co-existing in a particular region. In such cases the claims of a minority is bifocal; it is a) against the domination of majority; and b) towards getting equal status vis-à-vis other minority communities. This is because of the fact that promoting their cultural values entails not only concessions from the majority community but also entails equal concern with other minority groups. Thus, equality

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50In a recent work of Baogang He and Will Kymlicka this issue of western centric multicultural theory has been acknowledged thereby trying to locate the importance of a separate study of the unique Asian diversity. They notice the influence of the Western theories and examples of multiculturalism and minority rights on many Asian countries, and at the same time they admit the fact that these Western models are often not well understood in the region, and may not suit the specific historical, cultural, demographic, and geopolitical circumstances of the region. However, they, including those authors contributing articles in the book, still fathom majority-minority conflict going little towards the issue of inter-ethnic conflicts which is troubling many parts of the region. I have also mentioned this problem in my M.Phil Dissertation which was submitted in 2005 (perhaps before the publication of their book) to the Centre for Political Studies, SSSJNU. See Will Kymlicka & Baogang He (ed.), 2005, op.cit.
between (and among) various minority communities becomes important. Therefore, what we need to think is not only provisions for group rights vis-a-vis majority domination but also there is a need to adopt certain policies which can promote and encourage equality between and among various minority communities. It is in this context that I try to explore the unique nature of diversity and conflict between different ethnic communities in India. The need for such an exploration arises specially because there is an urgent need to call for a rethinking on theory and practice of the Indian version of multiculturalism, 'unity in diversity'. India presents one of the finest examples of ethnic configurations. The study of this configuration often contradicts the Western model of multiculturalism as the former has its own specific historical, cultural, demographic, and geopolitical circumstances. We have our own tradition of peaceful co-existence among linguistic and religious groups. We have our own problems amidst different conceptions of the value of tolerance among all the major ethical and religious traditions from Buddhist and Jains to Islamic and Hindus.

Theoretically India presents one of the finest variants of multiculturalism. Constitutionally, India has incorporated a variety of institutional arrangements to meet challenges of a society that inhabits a large number of cultural and linguistic groups. Thus, theoretically, India has departed from other Asian States that have been criticized for responding to minority nationalism with suppression. If we look at the provisions of safeguarding minority religions, Indian version of secularism, cultural and educational rights of minorities, and provisions of protecting linguistic minorities, safeguards for the tribal ethnic groups, Anglo Indians, and other special provisions for specific communities, it is

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51One of the major achievements of independent India was that it was among the first few democracies, as Gurpreet Mahajan says, to embark on the multicultural path. Much before many of the Western liberal democracies did, India had already acknowledged the rights of minorities and value cultural diversity as against the neutrality and difference blind approach. See Gurpreet Mahajan, 2005, 'Indian Exceptionalism or Indian Model: Negotiating Cultural Diversity and Minority Rights in a Democratic Nation-State', in Will Kymlick & Baogang He, 2005, pp. 288-313.
clear that the Indian State does not treat its citizens as mere individuals, respecting their individual rights only. It acknowledges that its citizens differ from one another in a number of ways; they differ in language, in religion, in race, in level of development, and more generally, in culture. Thus, Indian State system deviates from original liberal tradition. But, one major question is that ‘are these provisions working properly in the way it ideally should be?’ Now the time has come to have an academic discussion on this question.

**The Meghalayan Experience**

Sometimes it is said that historically “indigenous” people are, as a rule, not able to uphold their rights or their interests in free and open individualistic competition with those who are more advance. Thus, “the liberal, moved by humane concerns, has to favor some kind of a special, protective regime for them – perhaps establishing territorial reserves from which others are excluded”. If it is true, and if there is any example in India for reserving separate (or rather exclusive) territory for enabling vulnerable ethnic communities to uphold their rights and interests, there is no better example than the case of Meghalaya. The case of Meghalaya is very interesting in many aspects. One of them is that different from the institutional options mentioned earlier, which have been adopted off and on in the western liberal social context, the State has a number of policy initiatives by the government of India, and some of these echo the suggestions of the multi-culturalists. Many of such provisions have been adopted in other North-East States too in the hope to resolve ethnic crisis. There are special provisions mentioned in the Articles 371A, 371 B, 3771C, etc, for these States.

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52 Dyke, op.cit. pp. 28-29.
and Sixth Schedule and many other policies specific to each State. In Meghalaya there are three District councils created for each major tribes with the objective to control and administer over tribal lands and forests, and to be a custodian of customary laws and practices. These District Councils have many responsibilities among which important ones are the power to make laws with respect to the appointment or succession of Chiefs or Headmen; the inheritance of property; marriage and divorce; social custom, etc. It can constitute village councils or courts for the trial of suits and cases between the parties all of whom belong to Schedule Tribes within such areas. It has the power to establish primary schools, may prescribe the language of instruction and the manner in which primary education shall be imported in the primary schools in the District.

Meghalaya has the unique distinction of having retained its customary laws and practices and its traditional institutions. And again there is the Meghalaya transfer of land (Regulation), Act that stipulates that no land in Meghalaya shall be transferred by a tribal to a non-tribal or by a non-tribal to another non-tribal or by a non-tribal or non tribal to another non-tribal except with the previous sanction of the competent authority. The Meghalaya Maintenance of Public order (Amendment) Act (1979) enables the State government to distinguish between a permanent non-tribal resident and one who settled in the State recently. And there are a host of other Bills and Acts. And even Meghalaya was created to meet the aspirations of ethnic groups that inhabit it.

However, this unique case of institutional arrangements in Meghalaya needs a serious discussion. Meghalaya, as mentioned above, has the unique distinction of having retained its customary laws and

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56 Bakshi, op.cit.
57 Ibid.
58 Acts are as explained in C Reuben Lyngdoh and LS Gassah in “Decades of Inter-ethnic Tension”, Economic and Political Weekly, November 29, 2003.
practices and its traditional institutions. In fact the State is relatively peaceful than other sister-states where same ethnic tension persist. However, there are two questions to be addressed. First, are these provisions enough for a lasting solution of such crisis? The significance of the question lies in the recent communal/ethnic violence erupted in the State. After the creation of Meghalaya, peace came in the State for some time. But since the 1990s ethnic conflicts have come again to the fore. With so many policies and special provisions why does the State still face problems of ethnic conflict? Where the problem lies? Does this State need more recognition of its ethnic communities or something else for instance material redistribution?

Secondly, for a viable solution of such ethnic crisis in other States, shall we adopt the same mechanism, which has been experimenting in Meghalaya? As mentioned earlier, the case in Manipur is really different from what we have in Meghalaya. In such cases, what could be the possible steps we need to take in future?

**Three Principles**

Both the questions are not easy to answer. In answering these questions one needs to have a fair amount of knowledge regarding existing conditions in each State including demands made by different groups, and the responses of the States. However, any kind of mechanism is to be prepared on the basis of three inter-related principles. We need to take these principles seriously because recognition through group rights is important but since all demands cannot be fulfilled, there should be certain basis or principles on which a particular demand or right be accepted. Until now, multicultural policies are formulated on the basis of two principles only, namely,

i) Survival of culture;

ii) Promotion of basic democratic values

Let me explain each of these principles in succession briefly. It has already been noted that multiculturalism cherishes diversity. Giving due recognition to diverse cultures is a basic precondition for enhancing the range of equal citizenship. Even contemporary liberals argue that human beings are culturally embedded in the sense that “they grew up and live within a culturally structured world and organize their lives and social relations in terms of a culturally defined system of meaning and significance.”

Different cultures represent different system of meaning and vision of good life. Since each realizes a limited range of human capacities and emotions, and groups only a part of totality of human existence, it needs other cultures to help it understands itself better, expand its intellectual and moral horizon, stretch its imagination save it from narcissism to guard it against the obvious temptation to absolutise itself, and so on. This does not mean that one can not lead a good life within one’s own culture, but rather that, other things being equal, one’s way of life is likely to be richer if one also enjoys access to others, and that a culturally self contain life is virtually impossible for most human beings in the modern, mobile and independent world. Kymlicka mentions that the decision about how to lead our life must ultimately be ours alone, but this decision is always a matter of selecting what we believe to be the most valuable from a context of choice which provides us with different ways of life. This is important because the range of option is determined by our cultural heritage. Different ways of life are not simply different patterns of physical movements. The physical movements only have meaning to us because they are identified as having significance by our culture, because they are identified as having

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60 Bikhu Parekh, 1999, op.cit.
61 Ibid.
significance by our culture, because they fit into some pattern of activities which is culturally recognized as a way of leading one's life.\footnote{This explanation is most extensively done in Kymlicka, 1989, pp. 164-65.}

According to Gurpreet Mahajan, community identity and public domain are two inseparable values. She says, “Community membership influences their predicaments and structures the way other people relate to them. As such, cultural identities are important. They define, at least in part, who are community memberships can not be completely effaced from public domain, nor can they be restricted to the private sphere alone.”\footnote{Gurpreet Mahajan, 2002, The Multicultural Path, Issue of Diversity and Discrimination in Democracy, New Sage Publication, New Delhi, p.38.}

Thus, any kind of multicultural policy should aim at protecting cultures rather than obliterating them. In other words, we should recognize the importance of cultural values not only in self-development of individuals but also in creating conditions for equal citizenships. Any policy detrimental to such survival of cultures should not be accepted. It is in this sense that multiculturalists often say that there is a need to institute protection for minority cultures as they are either devalued in the public sphere, or marginalized and suffer from a denial of self respect.\footnote{It is not that the cultures of the minorities are the only important ones and need to be promoted at the cost of the majority culture. It means simply that cultures which have been marginalized should be revalued and revalidated in the public sphere through special arrangements such as group representation. If minority cultures are either decaying because of what has been often termed as ‘benevolent neglect’ or if they are subjected to virulent attacks, they should be protected through special arrangements such as minority rights.} But I don't mean that all cultural values are good and to be promoted in an unqualified manner. There should be limits and permissibility.\footnote{For limits and permissibility see Parekh, 2004, pp. 289-308.}

ii) Promotion of Basic Democratic values: Preservation of cultural values cannot be the sole criterion in framing multicultural policies. Even though culture is important and its survival necessary, this preservation of cultural values should not be done at the cost of basic democratic values. Both are equally important and therefore, there
is a need for the qualification of one value by the other. As we have seen, one of the most important bases of criticizing group rights is the possible violation of basic human rights. On many occasions we find violation of basic democratic values in the name of preserving culture. As I mentioned earlier, since most cultures endorse control over women by men, preserving cultural practices may well become another way of violating their rights and consenting to patriarchal domination in society. Group rights may, thus, assist in the continued subordination of women. There are many other examples, for instance, the practice of “shunning” or “banishing” those members who have violated community norms of the Amish. In this way unqualified culture can be a tool of cultural practices, which undermines the basic freedom of individuals. Any sort of cultural practices, which undermine the basic freedom of individuals, should not be permitted. What are these democratic values?

Some theorists including Kymlicka have outlined some basic inviolable rights including freedom of speech, association, and conscience. However it should be done with proper consideration of one’s cultural needs and minimum expectations of individual members of that particular cultural community. The relationship between individual freedom and cultural values sometimes appear very conflictual. It will be wrong to impose certain cultural practices upon individual members against their will. Thus, all multicultural policies should be based on both the values namely individual rights and cultural values.

These above explained values or the principles are extremely important in the formulation of multicultural policies. Nevertheless, there

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67It is to be noted that there are more supporters of individual rights than that of cultural rights. And some of the supporters go to the extent of saying that the goal of political actions be based only on individual rights and nothing else. Even Ronald Dworkin’s thesis on rights as trump is more to do with individual rights than community as a whole. He even went to say that if someone has a right to publish pornography, this means that it is for some reason wrong for officials to act in violation of that right even if they (correctly) believe that the community as a whole would be better off if they didn’t. For a better explanation see Ronald Dworkin, 1978, Taking Rights Seriously, London.
are contexts for which multicultural policies cannot be based on these two principles alone. In such cases one should take into account one more principle namely, 'equality between groups'.

**Equality between Groups**

What we are seeking today is not unequal treatment but equal treatment of all communities, within a multination State. Why we need equal treatment is to give every one equal concern. Thus, any kind of multicultural policy, which is devoid of the value of equality, should not be accepted. It looks very simple but we often forget the value of equal consideration. One culture cannot be promoted at the cost of other culture. If one culture permits some sort of practice, which actually limits the interest of the other, then there is no morality in promoting that particular practice. Of course, there may be conditions in which certain special treatment for a particular cultural community is necessary. This kind of treatment can be made when the community, which needs special treatment, is far behind the other in terms of its development and its culture vulnerable, provided this special treatment does not harm the interest of the other community/communities. In such arrangements freedom of some individuals may be limited. But it is justified because it is necessary to create 'equality' between groups. Thus, the final point is that we should try to promote the value of equality between groups.

The ultimate aim of a multiculturalist should be to make these principles complementary and to develop a way in which all these principles can co-exist. A policy devoid of any one of these principles should not be accepted. There may be difficulties in negotiating or reconciling these three principles, but we will face problems when we think of any policy, which overlooks any one of these principles. Why multination federalism and consociational democracy are not suitable in Indian context is mainly due to lack of the principle of equality between
groups. And we need to analyze why Indian constitutional frameworks cannot bring a viable answer to ethnic conflicts in the Northeast.

**Concluding Remark**

Recognition, which has its strongest support in Multiculturalism, is in fact instrumental in creating ‘equality’ in multi-ethnic, multi-religious societies. There are various factors in such societies due to which true equality cannot be attained by merely providing individual common universal citizenship and not giving due recognition to distinct identities of cultural communities. Nevertheless, the way multiculturalism is developed today should be refined in order to be able to address many other issues to which the present theories on multiculturalism hardly pay any attention. For instance, as I mentioned earlier the problem of inter-ethnic conflict should be made one of the core issues of multiculturalism. Again, many a time supporters of multiculturalism try to advance the importance of cultural identity as against the individual rights. Vernon Van Dyke sharply mentions the importance of recognizing the “existence of collective entities, just as individuals do – perhaps not tangibly but not transcendentally either; that these collective entities have moral rights that are distinct from the rights of the individual members; and that the frequent cases of conflict between the rights of the individuals and the rights of the collective entities, and between the rights of different collective entities, must be handled through a balancing process in which judgments are made about the relative urgency and importance of the various claims. Approximately the same standards can be employed in making these judgments as are already employed in connection with conflicts between the rights of individuals and the rights of State”.

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