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Exploration of Multiculturalism in Literature and Fine Arts

Editor

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MULTICULTURALISM AND ITS EMERGENCE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT:

Literature in English is a global phenomenon. This research paper points out the concept of multiculturalism, the historical concept of multiculturalism, the definitions of the various critics and the place of multiculturalism across the globe. It also points out two aspects of multiculturalism- they are cultural diversity and communal diversity. Multiculturalism is one manifestation of the postmodernist reaction to the deligitimization of the state and the erosion of the hegemony of the dominant culture in advanced capitalist countries. It prefers program from minority group and encourages minority people for representation in politics.

Key words: Multiculturalism, Race, Culture, Religion, Tradition, Unity, Diversity.

Multiculturalism, as generally understood, refers to ideology and policy in Western nation- states, which previously had an uncontested national identity. In 1970s and 1980s, it became a significant force in American society, as African Americans , Latins, other ethnic groups their own history. It is also a political concept. It means the equal rights accorded to distinct cultural groups or traditions by laws and government practices.

Multiculturalism is the only heading under which all immigrants' people can come together and lead. Many nations have accepted multiculturalism as their policy. It recognises so many citizenship itself usually result from the nationality laws of another country. It promotes freedom for many things and also support for minority festivals, holidays and celebration. Before dealing with the meaning and explanation of this theory, multiculturalism, it is very essential to see the definition of culture, its nature and scope as well. The term 'Multiculturalism was primarily used in the USA in connection with the demand of the black and the other minority communities for equal representation in American society. As a movement 'Multiculturalism' seeks to underscore the value of distinctly different ethnic, racial, cultural communities, which cannot allow to melt into a common culture.

According to Turner Terence, "Multiculturalism" is the post modernist reaction to the delegitimization of the state and the erosion of the hegemony of the deminent culture in advanced capitalist countries". It also draws ideas from post-colonial theory, which stands for the rights of the marginalised and weaker sections of society. Edward said, one of the earliest post-colonial theorists has critiqued the Western European altitude of superiority and the Europeans prejudice against the non-western cultures, especially African and Indian cultures. Judith Squires says, "Multiculturalism" has become the topic of movement, not only for political theorist but also for social theorist, sociologists, political theorists and educationalists".



Multiculturalism is one of the best systems that adjusts itself with social issues. There is flexibility in the culture because it changes as the world changes, so it cannot be accurately defined in terms of race or religion. We cannot neglect that multiculturalism is not only enabled the migrants to share in all the activities of communities but also increased their economic and social status besides their cultural integration with the hosts. A host of migrations resulted in drastic changes in social, economical and cultural structures. The advent of multiculturalism acknowledged the fact that the contemporary society is made up of discrete and assorted groups. We can say that there are two aspects of multiculturalism: they are cultural diversity and communal diversity. Andrew Heywood differentiates between two forms of multiculturalism. The term 'multiculturalism' has been used in both descriptive and normative. As a descriptive term, it has been taken to refer to cultural diversity "as a normative term multicultural implies a positive endorsement, even celebration, of communal diversity, typically based on either the right of different groups to respect and recognition or to the alleged benefits to the larger society of social and cultural diversity".

C. James Trotman, one of the critic says about multiculturalism that it uses several disciplines to highlights neglected aspects of our social history, particularly the histories of women and minorities....and promotes respect for the dignity of the lives and voices of the forgotten. Multiculturalism tries to restore a sense of wholeness in a post modern era that fragments human life and thought". It aims at minimising cultural differences. The west have accepted the policy promoting tolerance and respect for minority culture. Canada which is one of the multicultural nation, has accepted it as an official policy and accept its diversity and multiplicity. It widens the horizons of our life and its vision. By accepting multiculturalism, one can overcome the problems of social conflicts, discrimination, racism, caste, gender etc. It also controls gender related tolerance. It challenges the hegemony of single dominant culture. It also preserves ethno-cultural identity and sustains their cultural. Religious belief, rituals, customs, traditions and lifestyle that accommodates their food habits, dress codes and socio cultural habits.

Multiculturalism as a social theory has become very important in the literary theories at present. Multiculturalism is a multifaceted and flexible social theory that keeps Indian integrated. Though the countries social fabric is complex. We see that in India. People are of various caste, religion and creed. Social workers have solved various problems of the society. The great social reformers like Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi, Chhatrapati Sahu Maharaj, Jyotiba Phule have tried their level best to remove the bad customs and traditions. Hence we see a number of changes and transformations. India has managed its increasing diversity and maintained unity. Bhikhu Parekh views that "multiculturalism is in fact 'not about minorities' but is about the proper terms of relationship between different cultural communities", which means that the standards by which the communities resolve their differences e.g. "the principles of justice" must not come from only one of the cultures but must come from "through an open and equal dialogue between them". It is clear that multiculturalism is a weapon of justice which can solve a number of differences between various communities including minorities.

Literature in English is a global phenomenon. It has become usual that literature in English always emerge all over the world, thus literature in English is becoming increasingly multicultural. Global writers have been writing about culture. Today we see that English literature commands the realm of multicultural literature. Sir Walter Scott one of the multicultural writers wrote about Scotland for English readers as well as for his fellow citizen. Multicultural literature clearly reflects the works of multicultural societies and also



it is implicitly multicultural. Multiculturalism enables social and political factions to permit the expression of different cultures without punishing them. It is popular in South Korea. It has also much impact in many spheres of American life. It has irresistible impact in many fields of American life such as economic policies, media, art and literature. The recent trend is that multiculturalism evolved into a social movement which pertains to political and academic view points, with the Euro-centrism and Afro-centrism representing its ideological extremes. A critic Diane Ravitch observes that "Today pluralistic multiculturalism must contend that with a new, particularistic multiculturalism. The pluralists seek a richer common culture, the particularists insist that no common culture is possible or desirable.

The concept of multiculturalism enabled the people to view the diverse American society. It celebrates not only cultural race but also colour consciousness in American society. It has helped Indian writers in English to contribute a lot. In the last two decades, Indian writing in English has been recognized in the world literary scene due to the contributions of Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy. Salman Rushdie equalled with great people such as Milan Kundera and Gunter Grass. Salman Rushdie is the writer who brought the Indian experience to the arena of global literature. Later, Arundhati Roy's Booker prize winning novel, *God of Small Things* had drawn the attention of world literature. The cardinal factor for the popularity of these novelists is the spread of multiculturalism. It is said that there is no longer any White domination in literature in the West. Indian writers like Anita Nair and Vikram Seth brought much attention to Indian English literature which has attracted world wide readers.

Many Indian writers like Shashi Deshpande, Kiran Desai, Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee, Bharathi Mukherjee etc, have pointed out the shade of multiculturalism in their works. Lastly we can see that the reason for the emergence of multicultural literature is nothing but migration across the globe.

CONCLUSION

Multiculturalism remained intact since the migration have been pouring across the globe. It cannot be denied that multiculturalism is not only enabled the migrants to share in all the activities of communities but also increased their economic and social status besides their cultural integration with the hosts. Multiculturalism is one of the best system that adjusts itself with social issues. It has helped Indian writers in English as a great contribution

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