



Study of Multiculturalism in India and cultural studies in

English literature

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Abstract : An approach to the study of culture and society that incorporates critical critiques of established disciplines and epistemological frameworks, as well as innovations in gender, ethnicity, and sexuality studies that have arisen in the previous twenty-five years, is called cultural studies.. One of the most important aspects of a cultural studies approach is the idea that the ways we communicate, relate to others, and create cultural artefacts are all interconnected. It is also assumed that cross-disciplinary work is necessary to research culture in its whole.

Introduction :

Throughout human history, culture has had a tremendous impact on our daily lives. Infants enter the world with no prior cultural training, and the culture that surrounds them has a profound impact on their daily routines, attitudes, values, ideas, and beliefs. Culture not only influences every stage of a man's life, but it also completes his existence. Culture, on the other hand, is a man-made product. As a result, it may be claimed that once a culture has been founded, it has its own life. Another theory is that man's pre-human predecessors routinely used tools and that habit became custom via the transfer of tool-using habits to succeeding generations. Using tools as part of everyday life was a great way to stimulate the development of a primitive social brain. As a result, the first portion of the chapter concentrates on the emergence and development of culture. The English-language works of Indian fiction are regarded as historical records and repositories of Indian cultural heritage. The Indian worldview is a focus of the Westerners to expand their understanding of acculturation processes, as Dorothy M. Spenser correctly stated: Indo-Anglian literature is an important source for a systematic study of cultural interaction and cultural change.



Various authors have defined the word "culture" in their own ways. Various definitions of culture are available to represent the complexity and evolution of human civilization. Anthropologists, sociologists, critics, and literary artists all have differing views on the subject of culture. The Unabridged Oxford English Dictionary (A new English Dictionary on Historical Principles, 1961) gives the following definition of "culture":

the cultivation of the land, village or farm; and the cultivation or raising of a plant or crop. 'Culture' derives from the Latin word "cultus," which meaning cultivation, caring, and worship. One definition of culture is that it refers to fostering and developing the intellectual aspect of civilisation by means of education/teaching and training (1247-1248).

Traditional (historically derived and selected) ideas and their associated value make up the essential core of culture. Culture systems can be viewed as both the products of action and the conditioning elements that influence further action. Culture systems can be viewed as the products of action or the conditioning elements that influence further action.

Literature, Culture And Society

Literature, culture, and society are intertwined, according to Edward Said. Too often literature and culture are seen as politically or historically innocuous; this has often appeared to me and definitely my study of Orientalism has persuaded me that society and culture can only be understood together.

Literature also incorporates social, cultural, and universal ideals that have the potential to have a variety of effects on the lives of those who read it. In a literary work, there are a lot of cultural themes woven into its fabric. In this aspect, Terry Eagleton is correct:

In contrast to the splintered individuality of the capitalist marketplace, literary labour is perceived as a mystical organic oneness; it is spontaneous rather than logically prepared, creative rather than mechanical.

The Romantics marked the beginning of a shift in cultural values in English literature. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the concept of culture evolved as a response to



the Industrial Revolution's impact on society. 'Culture,' it seems, was the buzzword du jour. Throughout the 19th century, a variety of authors voiced their admiration for various sorts of perfection. Hence, "the harmonious development of those traits and capacities which constitute our humanity" is how S. T. Coleridge describes culture. As a result, he continues to say:

Certain individuals would stay at the centre of the humanities, fostering and broadening our understanding.

in charge of training those who made up or were going to make up the order's other, more numerous classes, as well as the guardians of physical and moral science.

He goes on to argue that the continuity of our culture was maintained via literary labour, and that the scrutinizers sought to safeguard and defend this continuity from being challenged by technology and mass media. Furthermore, in addition to these views and sentiments on the significance of cultural studies in the modern social framework, current cultural studies take ordinary life extremely seriously. Cultural studies seems to be concerned mostly in urban cultures, which is good since daily life in cities is a site that is both multi-layered and contestable. Routines are the foundation of daily existence.

Multiculturalism in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

In the United States, the word "multiculturalism" was initially used in reference to the desire for equal participation in American culture, including schools and universities, by the black and other minority populations. Multiculturalism has evolved from an idea to a political force throughout time. American culture has never been "white," but rather multiracial, according to this argument.

a wide range of experiences. Multiculturalism is a movement that aims to highlight the importance of unique ethnic, racial, and cultural groups that should not be allowed to blend into one another. Race, ethnicity, culture, religion, national origin, profession, socioeconomic level, age, and gender are just a few of the many distinctions it encompasses. Multiculturalism



has no bounds. It's important to individuals from all walks of life since it's a social idea. Furthermore, it may serve as a framework for assessing a person's attitudes about cultural diversity, human rights and privileges in a society.

Rather than a topic of debate and discussion, multiculturalism is a reality. Countries like Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom have implemented it in their policies. Multiculturalism is an official strategy that succeeds in fostering social concord, cultural tolerance, and mutual respect among other cultures. It not only acknowledges the existence of cultural variety, but also advocates for the appreciation and public affirmation of such distinctions. Appreciating cultural variety and helping the visible minority achieve equality and social justice are part of the process. There is also a strong emphasis on preserving various ethnic groups' distinct cultural identities, which includes their religious and cultural beliefs as well as their traditions in terms of cuisine and attire as well as their socio-cultural activities.

Many cultures are acknowledged in a geo-political region, and multiculturalism is a value that legitimises all of them. It recognises the diversity of cultures based on racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. Society thrives when people from different cultures can live peacefully together. Cooperation, tolerance, patience, respect, and understanding of many cultural groups define such a community. Cultural interaction, interchange of ideas, and promotion of the concepts of "harmonious coexistence" of numerous cultures (dominant/superordinate/subordinate/minority/weak/marginal/patriarchal/etc.) are all aims achieved via multiculturalism. In its role as a "-ism," it promotes the notion of variety as an example of difference and heterogeneity. It acknowledges the 'distinctiveness' and 'uniqueness' of each culture, which enriches human existence by increasing the variety and depth of human experience. All the many cultures in a community are a distinct and complex entity. Because each culture has its own distinctness and individuality, it must be taken into account.

Multiculturalism involves identity politics but it is a politics of difference. One advantage of multiculturalism, as has already mentioned, is that it challenges the hegemony of a single dominant culture and attempts to strengthen the ties between other cultural groups by appropriating their differences. The upper hand of one culture is thus discouraged. Thus,



multiculturalism has many beneficial functions: it prioritizes cultural pluralism; encourages social heterogeneity; and it sensitizes societies to the dangers of cultural dominance, hegemony and governance. The politics of difference points to the fact that any modern multicultural society ought to acknowledge its cultural diversity and identity related differences.

The common sociological assumption about 'identity' is that it mostly pertains to the individual. But the postmodern era has lent it wider connotations. Identity no longer has a monolithic implication but it now carries the notion of multiple identities, which include culture, group, ethnicity, religion, community, nation and universal identity. Such implications constitute identity politics. The individual of the present times, when s/he moves around the borderless world, carries with him all these implications of his identity and apparently the postmodern world has begun to acknowledge them.

Cultural identity pertains to an individual's affinity to his/her own particular cultural group which shares certain values and bonds. It also involves the visible as well as invisible aspects of a specific culture that differentiates its people from those of other cultures.

Community identity also forms a major issue in multicultural studies. Multiculturalists are of the opinion that in a non-homogeneous nation-state minority communities can be at a disadvantageous position. Majority communities in a nation-state can maintain social advantageous positions which can lead to the prejudiced marginalization of 'lesser' communities. And the marginalization can deprive them of their rights and opportunities. The agenda of multiculturalism consists of strategies which can resist such deprivations. So that the less privileged also get the opportunity to extend their relations with the wider society. Thus, the value of community identity and its distinctiveness are respected. Further, each community is encouraged to explore their potentialities in a society providing equal opportunities. Again, multiculturalism's community identity stands above all kinds of elimination and humiliation of the marginalized groups.

Another aspect that forms a major theme of multiculturalism is ethnic identity. The ethnic identity of an individual is a part of his consciousness. The terms 'minority' and 'ethnic' are sometimes used synonymously in order to identify groups which share a common language, race, religion or nationality. However, with the surprising progress in the means of transport and availability of jobs, Western countries have acknowledged the necessity of being multi-religious and multi-ethnic. Ethnic identity helps one to distinguish oneself from the other groups of a society. Ethnicity puts the respective groups under a single umbrella with its



different colors of language, religion, race, nationality and common cultural markers.

Religious identity is a powerful theme in democratic and secular politics. However, over-consciousness of one's religion can lead to clashes with other religions. Indeed globalization has accelerated migration and the flow of people from one country to another. The consequence of such movement is religious assortment at a global level. Yet there are occasions when religions clash. The purpose of multiculturalism is to avoid such religious frictions in a society and create the awareness that helps to keep each religion's religiosity intact. However, it is also a fact that religion is often politicized especially when it comes to the sharing of political power. Politicization of religion often leads to the loss of its ideological face. Multiculturalism treats religion as a spiritual force which can stabilize human life and, as such, asserts that religious identities should be protected and respected.

Multiculturalism in India:

We have picked Indian literature in English for our multicultural analyses, thus we go into great length on Indian diversity here. Even though India's social fabric is rich and varied, multiculturalism is a multidimensional and adaptable social philosophy that helps keep the nation together. The history of India's social, cultural, and religious traditions is vital to understanding Indian pluralism. Many different faiths, castes, and tribes are represented in Indian civilization. The transition from Vedic to Hindu religion has had a lengthy and complicated history. Indian society's integration/disintegration and homogeneity/heterogeneity have been shaped by the rise of caste, patriarchal behaviours, and religious movements. The caste system in Hinduism, a prominent religion, is based on one's birthplace and one's rank. In pre-independent India, Brahmins dominated the hierarchies of caste, gender, and culture. Aside from caste and religion, however, a number of issues have separated people. A lot of dissolving elements began demanding their rights and crying for acknowledgment after the country's independence. Brahmanism's modern objective is represented by Hindutava at the moment. Muslims in the nation, as well as the majority of so-called "Dalit-bahujans," are very concerned about this menace. Hindutva, it is often claimed, upholds and encourages the authority of the 'upper' caste and the enslavement of the 'lower' caste. So much of Indian history deals with Hindutavawadis and their unwillingness to strive for the rights of Dalits, Muslims, Christians, and Adivasi tribes as a result of their faith. They, on the other hand, have aided and entertained the Brahminical aristocracy.



Indian diversity seems to place a high value on the concept of identity. People's sense of self-identity is shaped by their feeling of place within many social groups, such as their country of origin, caste, social class, and religious affiliation. Identity is also linked to the group's cultural and linguistic heritage. In contrast to individuals who are 'broken','marginalized', and 'outsiders,' people who belong to the mainstream culture, religion, and society are concerned about their identity. Caste is a significant identifying characteristic for Hindus. There is an unique caste identity and way of life for every group. Some of the members of various castes were referred to be Hindus, but they were not permitted to practise their religious and civic rights.

Gender has a significant place alongside religion and caste in Indian culture. In the Vedic era, women were not permitted to recite or listen to Vedic hymns, and they were seen as submissive and inferior because of this. However, in the post-Modern era, the standing of Indian women has transformed and the division between men and women has been torn down.

We can see a lot of shifts and modifications as a result of Indian diversity in the postmodern context. No nation in the world today has an ethnically, racially, and culturally homogenous population in the postmodern era.

Conclusion :

The globe has shrunk to the size of a hamlet as a result of modernity and globalisation. India, as we all know, is a multiethnic society split along religious, caste, and economic lines. There have always been overlapping borders between these groupings. People of all faiths and groups are now learning to appreciate and tolerate the religious beliefs and cultural customs of others. People from various faiths and groups mingle together without sacrificing their own customs, traditions, and ways of life. India's culture is based on a long-standing tradition. It's an interesting place because of the wide range of cultures, dialects, religions, values, and traditions that exist inside it. Since the beginning, India has been characterised by its variety. By balancing individual and community rights in its constitution, India has been able to manage its rising diversity and keep its unity. To develop multiculturalism among India's anti-colonial, nationalist leaders was a wise decision Nationalist leaders like India's first prime minister,



Pandit Nehru, promoted the idea of "unity in diversity" after recognising the country's variety.

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