Multiculturalism

Building the Bridge between World Cultures in Twenty–first Century

Dr. Kishor Kumar Tripathy

Abstract

Multiculturalism is the set of values, structures, and practices held in common by a group of people, it is also often used to mean an environment which differences among communities and groups are recognized, respected and valued. Multiculturalism goes beyond being aware of differences in culture and being sensitive to them, respects and value diversity. It creates the environment demonstratine the capacity, knowledge, understanding and skills to communicate effectively with culturally diverse people- "Understandably, multiculturalism as a search for democratic public policy responses to cultural and ethnic diversity in certain countries is of prime interest to UNESCO, in so far as it embodies the ideal of reconciling respect for diversity with concerns for societal cohesion and the promotion of universally shared values and norms." (Christine Inglis-'Multiculturalism: New Policy Responses to Diversity'). Multiculturalism is a policy which is response for copying with cultural and social diversity in society. Multiculturalism is the systematic and comprehensive response to cultural and ethnic diversity which also covers educational, linguistic, economic and social components. It helps to communicate and interact effectively and positively with diverse individuals, cultural practice and beliefs in a diverse society. The feature of multiculturalism is to address issues of diversity and it flourishes democracy, tolerance, social justice, Peace and mutual respect between peoples and cultures. The moral teachings, beliefs, practices, manners and moreover the humanistic approach of culture contained in the teachings of diverse cultural practices are the essential factors for the establishment of universal peace and harmony. Multiculturalism in the twenty-first century is a positive approach which aims to create a better world based on unity in diversity, peace, harmony and co-operation. It has a definite role to build a bridge between the world cultures in twenty-first centruy.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Cultural Diversity, World Culture, Peace, Harmony

Multiculturalism and Its Characteristics:

In a multicultural society, special emphasis is given on tolerance, compassion and integration where all the members celebrate one another's culturally distinctive and expressions of cultural identity. Multiculturalism recognizes the importance of cultural integration among people from varied cultural backgrounds as the pursuit of new relations of democratic citizenship inspired by human rights and ideals.1 Multiculturalism as a policy recognized the contribution to the nation of the many ethno-cultural groups, and it encourages values of equality and mutual respect with regard to race, national or ethnic origin, color and religion. The objectives of multiculturalism are to acknowledge the freedom of all the members of society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage.- "As an alternative to assimilationism and differentialism, multiculturalism emphasizes that acknowledging the existence of ethnic diversity and ensuring the rights of individuals to retain their culture should go hand in hand with enjoying full access to, participation in, and adhesion to, constitutional principles and commonly shared values prevailing in the society. By acknowledging the rights of individuals and groups and ensuring their equitable access to society, advocates of multiculturalism also maintain that such a policy benefits both individuals and the larger society by reducing pressures for social conflicts based on disadvantage and inequality. They also argue that multiculturalism is enrichment for the society as a whole."2 Multiculturalism denotes a particular kind of policy approach that is chiefly used for the proper management of culturally diverse society. Multiculturalism creates the community where we live alongside one another. The term 'Multiculturalism' may be explained as "the policy of accommodating any number of distinct cultures within the one society without prejudice or discriminations." In a multicultural community special attention is given that everyone has culture and it develops acceptance and respect for differences among individuals and different cultural groups.3 Multiculturalism, as a policy response to different cultural practices and also a systematic and comprehensive response to cultural and ethnic diversity, is useful for creating peace and harmony in the modern world.

Multiculturalism and Cultural Diversity:

Cultural diversity refers a range of different societies or peoples having different origins, religions, traditions and lives in a society and interacting together.4 Cultural diversity is a defining characteristic of humanity which provides a common heritage for interaction between different cultural groups. "Cultural Diversity is ubiquitous in our lives. The world is more accessible and every day of our lives, we connect with people vastly different than ourselves. We need to understand and appreciate these differences to function effectively in our complex world. There is no doubt that we all learn from each other and grow each other. We need to remove preconceived biases and learn to appreciate each other for the richness we as human beings to relationships, both personal and professional."5 Cultural Diversity also makes the nation stronger and better able to compete in the

age of globalization, where people from diverse cultural traditions bring new ways of thinking, negotiation skills, creative solutions to different problems and it also creates a much more interesting place in which to live for all of its habitants. It is based on the principles that cultural identities should not be discarded or ignored, but rather maintained and preserved for the sustenance of human civilization. Multiculturalism, as a policy response to Diversity has its importance in dealing with diversity.6 It is the set of values, structures, and practices held in common by a group of people and often used to mean an environment which differences among communities and groups are recognized, respected and valued. Multiculturalism goes beyond being aware of differences in culture and being sensitive to them, respects and value diversity- "The issue of multiculturalism has been broadly discussed on both scientific and public level. During some past decades a multiculturalists perspective has been adopted by public policy framework in order to deal with cultural diversity.7 In a Multicultural society, different ethnic and cultural groups contribute for the social, economic, and cultural values, and synthesize the principles and characteristics for adapting to life situations in different parts of the world.

Multiculturalism and World Culture:

The world culture presents different geographical features, cultural traditions, manners and customs, which have produced some of the most ancient civilizations of the world.8 The survival and sustenance of human race on the earth depends on cultural values, which thrive on peace, cooperation, good will, love, loyalty and friendship have to be given more importance than anything else and have to be maintained at any cost. The approaches related to cultural identity and regard for humanity depends on the development of goodwill for others. The purpose is to encourage cultural identity and cultural integration which can be a cause of a definite asset to the cause of humanity. The idea of shared ideal of humanity and the oneness of all the creatures strives to spread peace, unity and compassion on the world stage and can be utilized as solutions to global issues related to the survival of cultural identity and human values. The objective of Cultural identity is to promote cultural expressions and multiculturalism can play an important role in this regard. It emphasizes that cultural practice is an ethical approach based on the principles of Integral Unity of all human beings. It emphasizes that culture is the philosophy of humanism and should be applied for global peace and harmony. Unity in Diversity' has been the distinctive feature of a multicultural society. To live peacefully has been the motto and this motto has helped us to create a healthy and pluralistic human civilization based on unity, peace and harmony. Unity in diversity, universal friendship and harmony is the supreme doctrine of a multicultural society, which inspires for the future of human unity, peace, and prosperity. The manners, way of communicating with one another, tolerance, secular ideas, spirit of unity, international cooperation, peace, inter-religious harmony etc. are the important components of multiculturalism.9 The distinguishing quality of humanity, its most precious possession, is the human unity, which was instructed by the ancient social thinkers or the survival of humanity. The important factor regarding multiculturalism is that it is not a desirable concept; it is a practical approach, which should be maintained for the sustenance of human civilization.

Cultural Dialogue & Development- Multicultural Perspectives:

Multiculturalism creates a platform for interaction between world cultures. In a broad perspective, multiculturalism accepts various ethnic cultures and treating impartially and fairly each ethnic group without promoting the values of a particular culture. Bridging the gap between cultures is urgent and necessary for peace, stability and development and multiculturalism is a driving force for integral development.10 Followings are some of the objectives regarding cultural interaction in a multicultural society-

· To promote cultural cooperation and to strengthen friendly relations between traditions, groups and communities.

· Mutual consultations considering the characteristics of a concrete and cross-cultural relations

· Cooperation in the field of exploration and collaboration with a view to investigating cultural relations

· To establish and develop closer cultural relations and desire of promoting and developing in every possible way and on a sound basis such relations

· To promote mutual consultations considering the characteristics of concrete and cross-cultural relationship

· Presents the characteristic of unity in diversity and should be continued for the benefit of all.

· Creates a rich and prosperous approach for development of communities, people's nations, and emphasizes cultural cooperation, tolerance, social unity and mutual respect between peoples and cultures.

Multiculturalism proclaims that everyone has culture and it develops acceptance and respect for differences among individuals and different cultural groups. Multiculturalism emphasizes that cultural relation as a strategic element for development of world culture. It also recognizes the importance of value systems, major traditions, diverse system of cultural unity and contribution for cultural co-operation.

Action Plan Development for Implementation of Multicultural principles and Multicultural Leadership Management:

Multiculturalism as a policy response to Diversity, has a definitely role to play in the areas of valuing diversity, fair access, participation encouragement and mutual respect, where different cultural traditions can interact and leave in a peaceful manner. Therefore, in the age of globalization, multicultural leadership management and action plan development for implementation of multicultural principles is an essential factor. Followings are some of the areas-

· Active consultative mechanisms to involve people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds;

· Development and Implementation of policies with special emphasis on inclusive policies, programs and services which are responsive to cultural and linguistic differences;

· Maintaining network relationships with ethnic community groups and individuals promoting Multicultural representations;

· Recognition of understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of diverse societies and acknowledges the freedom of all members to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage;

· Community engagement focuses to the connection between government, community and citizens in the development of policies, programs and services and projects.

· Identification and consultation with multicultural community agencies and networks to implement policies in the objective to face current issues related to multiculturalism.

· Promotion of strategies that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the heritage and identity and it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of the future of the world;

Multiculturalism, Global Peace and Harmony:

Global peace and harmony in the twenty-first century is a positive approach which aims to create a better world based on unity in diversity, peace and co-operation- "This secular dream of a future golden or half-golden age of a more perfected, rational and peacefully cooperative society has taken recently a singular step forward in the effectuating imagination of mankind and even got as far as some attempt at a first step towards actual effectuation. In ideal and imagination it has assumed the form of a political and economic society of the nations which will get rid of the cruel and devastating device of war, establish a reign of international law and order and solve without clash, strife or collision, by reason, by cooperation, by arbitration, by mutual accommodation all the more dangerous problems which still disturb or imperil the comfortable peace, amity and organized productiveness which should be the reasonable state of mankind. International peace, an ordered legality and arrangement of the world's affairs, a guaranteed liberty, —or for the unfit a preparation and schooling for liberty,— an organized unity of the life of the race, this is the figure of the golden age which we are now promised."11 Multiculturalism helps to communicate and interact effectively and positively with diverse individuals, cultural practice and beliefs in a diverse society, which will definitely create a peacefully cooperative society. The distinguishing quality of humanity, its most precious possession, is the human value, which was instructed by the ancient social thinkers or the survival of humanity. Human being is the most educable creature in the world. As far as the spirit of human civilization is concerned, human values are established in a society in view of the varied aspects of human life. The values can be examined in the context of social development, religious advancement and continuity of cultural traditions. The history of human evolution demonstrates that socio-technological evolution of man changed his social ethics, moral beliefs and social values. The basic objective of the development of spirituality and science

is the overall development of the human civilization. Contemporary world developed with scientific advancement and technological challenges, where materialism has challenged the spirit of human culture and there is a great question for the survival of the human civilization. Selfishness, hatred and global competition have created the social life of humanity more competitive and painful. There are global challenges in front of the human civilization, and it is very difficult for the survival of human values. There is a great threatening for the survival of human civilization and the whole world is facing mega problems, like global warming, excessive growth of population, war, growth of nuclear powers, destruction of forest, religious conflicts, racial and ethnic exploitation, poverty, proper sanitation facility etc. everywhere.12 Although science and technology has given tremendous contribution to solve some of the major problems of the world, it is essentially important to speak in this context that science cannot meet all the demands of the twenty-first century without harnessing science and technology with the holistic and moral teachings of diverse cultural traditions. The present world can benefit from the strengths of both scientific discoveries and multicultural ideology. Multiculturalism evolve theory and practice of diverse tradition based on an understanding of man, nature and the universe, in experience and practice, by which global peace and harmony can be created in the modern world. It is essential for the modern world to look back the sublime doctrines of multiculturalism and the concept need to be researched, experienced, and practiced for the achievement of global peace and harmony. Multiculturalism emphasizes that global peace is an ethical approach based on the principles of Integral Unity of all human beings. The basis of multiculturalism is the comparative instinct value system based on ideas and ideals, philosophy and spirituality, ethics and morality, which can be considered as the basis of global peace and harmony.13 The perspectives of the teachings and practices of multiculturalism are worth applicable for the realization of human values and to interact with cultural traditions, which will not only build the bridge between world cultures in twentyfirst century; but also will bring global peace and harmony for the peaceful coexistence of the human civilization.

Conclusion:

Multiculturalism, a policy response to different cultural practices and also a systematic and comprehensive response to cultural and ethnic diversity has given an extensive effort to cope democratically with diversity, developed in the very short time-span time. Multiculturalism is a unique concept for building a culture of inclusion and a systematic and comprehensive response to cultural and ethnic diversity which also covers educational, linguistic, economic and social components. Multiculturalism helps to communicate and interact effectively and positively with diverse individuals, cultural practice and beliefs in a diverse society. Multiculturalism has a bright future and it is a broad political ideology based on a set of specific public policies, focusing on the cultural identity of diverse communities. The manners, way of communicating with one another, tolerance, secular ideas, spirit of unity, international cooperation, peace, inter-religious harmony etc. are the important components of multiculturalism, which will definitely create a bridge between the world cultures. Multiculturalism accepts various ethnic cultures and create a

platform for interaction which further promotes co-operation and friendly relation between traditions, groups and communities. Multiculturalism emphasizes that cultural relation as a strategic element for development of world culture in the age of globalization and it promotes linkage between cultural interaction and development and recognition of the distinctive nature of cultural activities for a developed cultural relationship. Active consultative mechanisms, developing and implementing policies, maintaining network relationships with ethnic community groups, community engagement and development of multicultural strategies etc. are some of the possible areas for development of multicultural leadership in twenty-first century.

Notes & References:

1. Reitz, Jeffrey G. & et. al (2009) Multiculturalism and Social Cohesion: Potentials and Challenges of Diversity, Springer Science Business Media, BV., p. 1

2. Multiculturalism: A Policy Response to Diversity, Paper prepared on the occasion of the "1995 Global Cultural Diversity Conference", 26-28 April 1995, and the "MOST Pacific Sub-Regional Consultation", 28-29 April 1995, both in Sydney, Australia, Management of Social Transformations, © UNESCO 1995.

3. Kymlicka, Will (2012), Multiculturalism: Success, Failure, and the Future, Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, "In most of the post-multiculturalists literature, multiculturalism is characterized as a feel-good celebration of ethno cultural diversity, encouraging citizens to acknowledge and embrace the panoply of customs, traditions, music and cuisine that exist in multiethnic society." p.4

4. Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expressions, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2005. "Cultural diversity" refers to the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expressions. These expressions are passed on within and among groups and societies. Cultural diversity is made manifest no only through the varies ways in which the cultural heritage of humanity is expressed, augmented and transmitted through the variety of cultural expressions, but also through diverse modes of artistic creation, production, dissemination, distribution and enjoyment, whatever the means and technologies used. p.4

5. Parvis, Leo (2013), Understanding Cultural Diversity in Today's Complex World, Preface, Embrace Publication and Consulting, LLC.

6. Launikari, Mika & Puukari, Sauli (2005) Multicultural Guidance and Councelling: theoretical Foundations and Best Practices in Europe, Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyvaskyla.

7. Neumannova, Radka (2007) Multiculturalism and cultural diversity in modern nation state, Conference Turin 2007, University of Economics, Prague Czech Republic, "The issue of multiculturalism has been broadly discussed on both scientific and public level. During some past decades a multiculturalists perspective has been adopted by public policy framework in order to deal with cultural diversity. The idea of multicultural society has its roots in nation-states, throughout their histories, when confronted with international migration such as, i.e., Canada, The United States and Australia. These states are conventionally referred to as examples of various forms of multicultural society, accommodated through nation states public policies."

8. Kraemer, Hendrik (1960), World Cultures and World Religions: The coming Dialogue based on the Stone Lectures delivered at Princeton Theological Seminary, London: Lutterworth Press

9. Reitz, Jeffrey G. & et. al (2009) Multiculturalism and Social Cohesion: Potentials and Challenges of Diversity, Springer Science Business Media, BV.

10. Modood, Tariq (2013) Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea, UK, Polity Press

11. Sri Aurobindo (1997) The Human Cycle, The Ideal of Human Unity, War and Self-Determination, Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Pondichery: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, pp. 636

12. Hensel, Sai Felicia Krishna, (2006), Global Co-operation: Challenges and Opportunities in the Twenty-first Century, Hampshire, Ashgate Publishing Limited, p. xi

13. Phillips, Anne (2001) Multiculturalism, Universalism and the claims of Democracy, Democracy, Governance and Human Rights Programme Paper Number 7, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, pp. 9-11