

# Overview of Multicultural Literature

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## ABSTRACT :

The term multiculturalism has become a global phenomenon. It is quite challenging task to precise a core meaning and nature of multiculturalism as it is like a tree with many interconnected branches. To put the meaning straight and comprised, multiculturalism is recognition of cultural and ethnic diversities that exist in a society, and of a society in which individuals of all cultural groups are accepted and accorded respect. Multiculturalism holds the nature of appropriate bond of relationship between diverse cultures and communities. Moreover, it is about establishing enhanced communication between diverse ethnic, religious and cultural groups. The term multiculturalism itself has multiple meanings. The term 'multiculturalism' is derived from the use of the adjective multicultural', specially used in the phrases like, 'multicultural society'.

KEYWORDS : Multiculturism, Communities, Communication, Literature

## I. MULTICULTURALISM

As thousands of elements design the universe so is the human life and society. The term multiculturalism has become a global phenomenon. It is quite challenging task to precise a core meaning and nature of multiculturalism as it is like a tree with many interconnected branches. To put the meaning straight and comprised, multiculturalism is recognition of cultural and ethnic diversities that exist in a society, and of a society in which individuals of all cultural groups are accepted and accorded respect. Multiculturalism holds the nature of appropriate bond of relationship between diverse cultures and communities. Moreover, it is

about establishing enhanced communication between diverse ethnic, religious and cultural groups. The term multiculturalism itself has multiple meanings. The term ‘multiculturalism’ is derived from the use of the adjective ‘multicultural’, specially used in the phrases like, ‘multicultural society’.

According to Parekh (2000), multiculturalism is a normative response to the fact of multicultural society (cultural diversity). Parekh draws attention towards understanding multiculturalism as a perspective on or a way of viewing human life. Parekh clarifies the concept as, “that is, a body of beliefs and practices in terms of which a group of people understand themselves and the world and organize their individual and collective lives”

The meaning drawn by Parekh (2000) defines multiculturalism as an encouragement to a positive acceptance of races, religions and cultures. Contrasts with the monoculture less, multiculturalism promotes the ideology of equal status of distinct cultural groups within a society.

Bhargava (2002) defines multiculturalism as a fact of presence of many cultures and as a value of celebrating many cultures. He states:

A number of interrelated themes are put together by the term ‘multiculturalism’: the need to have a stable identity, the contribution of cultural communities to the fulfillment of this need, the link between identity and recognition, the importance of cultural belonging and the desire to maintain difference. For a start, a distinction needs to be made between the fact and the value of multiculturalism. As a fact, multiculturalism simply registers the presence of many cultures. It’s abstract enumerative character, indefinite quality and surface, and decontextualized from make it amenable to different interpretations, open to different ideological incarnations, with applicability across space and time. Hence, the possibility of an Indian multiculturalism. As a value, multiculturalism morally endorses the presence of many cultures, even perhaps celebrates them. To put it simply, multiculturalism as fact and value challenges the fact and value of a single-culture society.

Multiculturalism is also specific types of program and policy initiative that respond to and manage cultural, lingual, and ethnic diversity in certain countries like Canada, Australia and

France. The term ‘multiculturalism’ finds the similar meaning as ‘unity in diversity’ in India. As a policy or as an assemblage of values, multiculturalism acknowledges and ensures rights of individuals to retain their culture. Multiculturalism views each culture or subculture in a society as contributing unique and valuable cultural aspects to the whole culture. It is more concerned with preserving the distinction between cultures and yet connecting them. Thus, it is openness to diverse cultural and ethnic groups and as a value; it is about respecting and accepting the diversities.

The explicated meaning of multiculturalism elucidates that it is a term often used to describe societies with a proliferation of different cultures. It is a value-response to celebrate the diversity and complexity of human experience. Hence, it is about recognizing and respecting cultural, racial, lingual, religious and ethnic diversity that exist in a society.

## II. MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Multicultural society is the existence of ethnic and cultural diversity with varying patterns of behavior, beliefs, values and tradition in a nation. Multicultural society has multi-sphere atmosphere. It is an ‘umbrella’ of a social environment, under which various ethnic, cultural, racial, religious, lingual, communal, group exist. It has now become an inevitable and prime characteristic of the world. Today nearly all societies and nations are surged with multicultural-ethnic population. More and more countries are becoming culturally diverse, because of globalization and migration. According to Parekh (2000), a ‘multicultural society’ is a society that exhibits three and other kinds of diversity. He explains these three and other kinds of diversity as:

1. **Subcultural Diversity:** members of subcultural diversity share a broadly common culture, some of them either entertain different beliefs and practices concerning particular areas of life or evolve relatively distinct ways of life of their own. They all broadly share their society’s dominant systems of meaning and values and seek to carve out within it spaces for their divergent lifestyles.

2. **Perspectival Diversity:** members of this Perspectival Diversity are highly critical of some of the central principles or values of the prevailing culture and seek to reconstitute it along appropriate lines. Feminists attack its deeply ingrained patriarchal bias, religious people its secular orientation, and environmentalists its anthropocentric and technocentric bias. These and other groups represent neither subculture, for they often challenge the very basis of existing culture, nor distinct cultural communities living by their values and views of the world, but intellectual perspectives on how the dominant culture should be reconstituted.

3. **Communal Diversity:** members of this communal diversity include the newly arrived immigrants, such long-established communities, various religious communities, and such territorially concentrated cultural groups.

A multicultural society includes two or more cultural communities and the term multiculturalism generally shows all these three or more kinds of diversities. In some countries when the immigrants of ethnically diverse groups came, the countries portray as demographically and culturally 'Multicultural'.

A multicultural society or nation includes natives, immigrants, migrants, and aboriginal people. The multicultural condition can be found in a state, a country, a region, or even small geographical area like a school or a small town. The demographic-descriptive usages occur where 'multicultural' is used to refer to the existence of ethnically or racially diverse segments in the population of a state or country.

### III. MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE

Multicultural literature describes how people live in different parts of the world. In other words, we can learn about their culture and beliefs. It also presents an accurate representation of the culture it portrays and must be free from stereotypes, or beliefs about a particular group that are oversimplified or based upon generalizations. Through these accurate representations, we can build a clear understanding of the culture's heritage as it is portrayed in the text.

There are six main goals in teaching children multicultural literature. First, multicultural literature increases sense of self-worth and a sense that they have a chance for a successful

future. Knowledge about other cultural groups lays the foundation for developing cultural pluralism, which is defined as a condition in which many cultures coexist within a society and maintain their cultural differences (dictionary.com), intergroup harmony and the ability to think from a multicultural perspective .

The second goal includes achieving educational equity. Educational equity has three basic conditions: a) an equal opportunity to learn, b) positive educational outcomes for both individuals and groups, and c) equal physical and financial conditions for students to grow to their fullest potential cognitively, academically, and affectively .

The third goal is working towards cultural pluralism. When educators support cultural pluralism they modify fundamental conditions to promote equitable learning. Their goal is to help students develop understanding and respect for people who are different from them .

The fourth goal of multicultural literature is to create a sense of empowerment in students. Students must help students become independent learners. Empowerment also helps student take an active role in improving the lives of others .

The fifth goal includes the ability to work in groups in harmony. Educators provide knowledge and skills that prepare students to work with members of their own cultural groups and other cultural groups. Instruction includes opportunity for students to work with and learn from each other .

The final goal includes teaching from a multicultural perspective. This means educators must challenge assumptions and stereotypes. For example, teachers need to select literature that does not promote stereotypical perspectives. Also, teachers must see that culture, race, gender, religion, SES, and ability are variables in the learning process .

#### **IV. CONCLUSION :**

Multicultural literature serves as a powerful tool in enabling students to gain a better understanding of both their own culture and the cultures of others. Through this deeper knowledge, relationships can be strengthened, bridging the gap between students from

diverse cultural backgrounds . As students of the 21st century are global participants, it is important that they possess cultural sensitivity. Through extensive research by Norton in the year 2009, it has been discovered that when students can relate global events to the themes, conflicts and characterisations found in multicultural literature as it helps them in better understanding different issues in world. Students therefore develop greater cognitive skills as they learn to engage with and critically evaluate the texts that they read.

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