

**RETHINKING MULTICULTURALISM: EXAMINING
ISSUES OF ETHNIC DIVERSITY WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MANIPUR**

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of the requirement for the award of the Degree of*

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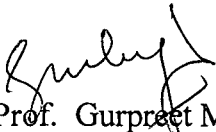
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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the Dissertation entitled, “**Rethinking Multiculturalism: Examining Issues of Ethnic Diversity with Special Reference to Manipur**”, by Nameirakpam Bijen Meetei, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work of his own. This Dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree in this University or any other University.

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Introduction

Why 'Rethinking Multiculturalism'? Why do we need to rethink multiculturalism at all? Since its emergence in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the Aglo-American world,¹ multiculturalism has been explained and conceptualized in a variety of ways. The most important concern of the theories of multiculturalism, developed so far, is the importance of diversity and group rights in general, and the concern for minority rights in particular. Most of the earlier theories were concerned, more or less, with the western liberal socio-political structures. In other words, the earlier works or theories of multiculturalism have been developed in the context of western democratic society with few exceptions. They try to explain the importance of diversity and the question of discrimination or problems arising out of non-recognition of minority cultural values in those societies.

My study also deals with the issues of multiculturalism. However, this study has got certain points different from what the other scholars have done. It begins with the observation that the question of group rights or the discrimination meted out to the minorities should not be the only concern of multiculturalism. There are many other related problems and issues around the

¹ Timing for its emergence is discussed in an M. Phil dissertation *Minority Rights in the Liberal Tradition: The Emergence of Multiculturalism* by Amir Ali, CPS, SSS, JNU, New Delhi-67, 2000, pp. 1. Introduction, thus, this timing is given by Amir in his dissertation.

concern diversity and these too need to be addressed. One such problem is related to the importance of individual rights. When some group specific rights are granted to certain community, there is the possibility that individual rights of the members within the community may be undermined. It is perceived that every individual needs some basic individual rights for safeguarding his or her personal life. How can the importance of basic individual rights be kept intact? And how can multiculturalism respond to this question? Liberals have repeatedly raised this question and questioned multicultural policies on this ground. The present study also emphasizes the importance of basic individual rights, but together with importance of community membership. Hence, even as it accepts that individual rights are important as it argues that these rights can not be promoted at the cost of group or community rights.

There is another aspect of multiculturalism that has been problematised here. Usually 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 majority community culture vis-à-vis the culture of minorities. 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 cultural values vis-à-vis the domination of majority community. The relationship between minority and majority is important but it is just one of the many

problems that the multiculturalism concern for cultural diversity must confront. For, there are contexts in which various minority groups co-existing in a region compete with one another. In such cases the claims of a minority is bifold; 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 between and among various minority communities becomes important. Therefore, this study suggests that, what we need to think is not only provisions for group rights vis-à-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. This thesis is an attempt to address this issue of multiculturalism by studying a specific case within India. It looks into the problems of minority ethnic relationship in Manipur. Here the case is not simply conflict between majority and minority or the claims against the majority. It is about competition among various ethnic minorities.

Last but not the least, multiculturalism needs to direct its attention towards the problem of developing suitable political institutions for addressing the problems of diversity effectively. In the attempt to devise measures to enhance diversity and to accommodate different minorities with equal respect and concern, many kinds of

institutional arrangements have been suggested and tried. While some of these political institutions are successful in some contexts, these are not applicable or adequate for dealing with situations where conflicts occur between various minority communities. The larger argument being that we need context specific institutions. This thesis is an attempt to present certain kind of socio-political set up which can be applied in the case of different ethnic minorities competing with one another within the same territory in general and to Manipur in particular. It is in this regard that the thesis reflects upon the limitations of existing theories of multiculturalism and to rethink the framework of multiculturalism.

The thesis is divided into three main chapters, and a conclusion. One of the central concerns of the thesis is to re-evaluate the existing theories on multiculturalism. Therefore, it begins by explaining what is meant by multiculturalism and how different theories understand agenda of multiculturalism. The first chapter responds to three questions that are central to defining multiculturalism. First, why people cherish diversity? Or, what is the importance of diversity in multi-ethnic or multi-national societies? Second, when a liberal society is actually committed to certain values and cannot tolerate every cultural practices, how do we promote differences or diversity? Third, if every individual have been given equal individual rights then what is the necessity for providing group specific rights of community? These are the

questions that multiculturalism seeks to answer. One of the points that I try to stress in this chapter is that the kind of relationship that exists between liberal democracy, on the one hand, and multiculturalism on the other, is that of a symbiotic relationship. To put in simpler words, it means that the liberal belief of equal treatment and the value of multiculturalism are complementary to each other. I am stressing this because some liberals have questioned the multicultural policy of providing group rights collectively to the minority communities and argued that the latter are inconsistent with the liberal belief of equal treatment. In the opening chapter I advance the view that we need multiculturalism or multicultural policies not because of the need to continue with the existing power hierarchy within a group but to enhance the space of 'equal concern of all'.

The second chapter presents one of the most important issues of multiculturalism, namely, creating structure and policy that nurtures multiculturalism and provides an environment for resolving the conflicts arising from ethnic diversity. As I will explain in this chapter, there is a need to understand the kinds of ethnic minorities and the kinds of arrangements that have been explored so far to provide harmonious relationship between various groups. Thus, the main purpose of the second chapter is to unfold and examine ways in which minorities have been classified by western theorists, especially Will Kymlicka, and the limits of proposed arrangements to deal

with ethnic conflicts. The main argument that is advanced here is that the offered patterns of classification cannot claim universal application. Even when a given type of minority exists in all societies, the demands they make and the manner in which they construct themselves varies from society to society. For instance, the immigrants, as classified in the West and East European countries or American continents, have a demand which seeks a more liberal policy of integration. This is the most common demand of these immigrants. We see a very contrasting position of immigrants in Manipur. Here, the immigrants demand not merely integration but separate 'homeland'. Justification for such demands is another problem which we need to address. Here, I propose that since the kinds of demands and claims made by minorities are varied and numerous we need to set certain limits or specify boundaries of permissible claims. This is important especially when the society is fragmented with different and multiple ethnic groups co-existing.

Another point I need to emphasize here is that there are many policies developed in the West for maintaining ethnic diversity. Examples of such policies are found in Australia, Canada and other western countries. Now the question is whether these policies developed in the context of western societies can be adopted in the Eastern part of the globe with the same effect. Though the nature of some of the diversities is similar, it is very difficult to say 'yes'.

The biggest reason is that the problem and nature of diversity in each case is different.

I believe that problems confronting multiculturalism today are not simply related to giving certain group specific rights to some collective communities. Rather it is all about adjusting interrelationship of three basic values of human lives, viz., individual human rights; group or community based rights; and, equality between and among groups. On the one hand, there is a compulsion to provide all individuals with some basic rights regardless of their community memberships. On the other hand, there is a necessity of recognizing the value of community membership. Now, the question is 'how to promote all these values simultaneously?'

The ultimate aim of a multiculturalist should be to make these principles complementary to one another and develop an environment in which all these principles can co-exist. While raising and addressing these questions, chapter II discusses the example of Fiji and through it tries to understand the viability of suggested framework for resolving ethnic conflicts and promoting the policy of equal concern.

Chapter III examines the applicability of existing multicultural theories, developed in the context of the Western democratic countries, to other contexts. It focuses on the case of Manipur. Manipur presents a very complex social structure regarding cultural community relationships. With its nearly 30 tribes and different

cultural communities, Manipur presents a great challenge to earlier multicultural theories. Conflicts arise from not only assimilationist attitudes of some of the bigger tribes but non-recognition of the values of smaller cultural group lives. We often see communal riots between Naga and Kuki; between Kuki and Paite, and the likes. Above all this, we have already witnessed riots between the Meeteis and the Meetei-Pangal.

Finding a viable solution to these problems is a great challenge. My position in such a scenario is that since the claims of all cultural communities are varied they should be dealt with different considerations. And since the kinds of theories developed in the context of Western liberal democratic countries are not fit for such conditions, we need to think of a different and new socio-political set up for providing the environment of peaceful co-existence of diverse cultural communities.

In the Conclusion, I will try to outline, in brief and somewhat schematic form, a framework of institutions for Manipur. This system of governance, I hope, can be used for giving due recognition to the different ethnic communities existing in Manipur, while simultaneously creating an atmosphere of equal concern.

Chapter I

Multiculturalism: The Road to Equal Concern

'Diversity', perhaps, can be the most suitable word to define the present social structure of any given society. The fact is that most societies are multinational, having diverse cultural and ethnic communities. This diversity has a specific significance vis-à-vis the liberal state policies.

The diverse cultural, ethnic or religious communities have distinct ways of life, which they cherish and want to preserve. This is also a fact that 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 the liberal society holds dear. Though the liberal society is tolerant of differences, it is actually committed to certain values and cannot tolerate every cultural practice¹.

In view of this diversity, we can point out two specific questions the liberal states face. First, how a liberal state has to make policies in such a way that it can promote the desire liberal ethos in the society and at the same time it promotes the important cultural values of diverse

¹ Bikhu Parekh 'Cultural Diversity and liberal Democracy' in Gurpreet Mahajan (ed.) *Democracy, Differences and Social Justice*, Oxford University Press Oxford, 1998 pp. 219-223.

communities and are not destroyed? The significance of the question lies in the fact that on the one hand liberal society is committed to certain values and cannot tolerate every cultural practices², and on the other hand there are numerous cultural communities with diverse and distinct cultural practices, they wish to preserve. Thus, the fact is that all the cultural practices cannot be promoted equally. Therefore, the issue of 'limits of diversity' comes up. Now, the question is how the liberal society should 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 society. This question seems identical with the first but not, in fact. Of course, some link can be built up between the two. Nevertheless, the second question has its own specific significance. It is not necessarily a question of conflict between liberal social values and diverse cultural community practices. Rather, it is more about conflicts among or between the existing communities within that liberal 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) equally is another. Conflicts in a multiethnic society cannot be overcome by simply

² These liberal values are talked about especially by Carens 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.

providing a common liberal value, it also needs certain policies which recognize distinct cultural values thereby giving differentiated autonomy to each community. Actually, this is the way and means of accommodating all the diverse cultural or ethnic communities within the society.

The fact is that liberal states have to make policies to accommodate all the diverse cultural or ethnic communities within its larger framework so that the members of that particular country are treated equally and fairly. But accommodating all the communities, again entails giving equal respect to the diverse cultural values of each particular community.

Thus, diversity in a nation-state is a fact. But, there will be problems in accommodating all the diverse communities fairly. This is so because every cultural community has a distinct 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”³.

³ Bikhu Parekh, ‘Equality, Fairness and Limits of Division’, *Innovation*, vol., 7 No. 3. 1994.

The problems of cultural diversity in a liberal democratic society are quite common. The selection of a particular day for reasons like rest, shopping, etc; language policy, etc. are examples. But the question, now, is that how will these problems be minimized if not solved?

Multiculturalism, actually, is a kind of movement that envisages a society in which all the diverse communities live together with equal dignity and concern. Gurpreet Mahajan⁴ mentions that multiculturalism is “a kind of universalism”. “It is not just a statement of facts, it is also a value. It cherishes cultural diversity and envisions a society in which different communities forge a common identity while retaining their cultural provenance. When modern democratic societies embrace multiculturalism, they demonstrate a deeper and more profound egalitarian impulse within them than the mere presence of plural culture. Multiculturalism acknowledges the existence of diverse communities, but what is more important is that it accords positive value to the collective identities of all ethnic communities. It pictures a society, which is characterized not by multiple cultural solitudes or endemic cultural strife, but by communities living together and participating as equal partners in national political life”.⁵ As such, “multiculturalism represents a new kind of universalism-one where integration of individuals into the

4 Gurpreet Mahajan , 'The Problem', *Seminar*, December, New Delhi, 1999, pp.12-13.

⁵ Ibid.

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. And the state recognizes that the dignity of the individuals are linked to the collective dignity of the community to which they belong".⁶

If we take the view of Bikhu Parekh, multiculturalism is best understood neither as a political doctrine with a programmatic content nor a philosophical school with a distinct theory of man's place in the world but "as a perspective on or a way of viewing human life".⁷ Parekh mentions that the central insights of multiculturalism are three, each of which is sometimes mis-interpreted by its advocates and needs to be carefully reformulated if it is to carry conviction. First, human beings are culturally embedded in the sense that they grow up and live within a culturally structured world and organize their lives and social relations in terms of a culturally derived system of meaning and significance. This does not mean that they are determined by their culture in the sense of being unable to rise above its categories of thought and critically evaluate its values and system of meaning, but rather that they are deeply shaped by it, can overcome some but not all of its influences, and necessarily view the world from within a culture, be it the one they have inherited and

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Bikhu Parekh 'What is Multiculturalism', *Seminar*, 1999 December, New Delhi, pp. 14-17.

uncritically accepted or reflectively revised or, in rare cases, one they have consciously adopted.

Second, different cultures represent different systems of meaning and visions of the good life. Since each realizes a limited range of human capacities and emotions and grasps only a part of the totality of human existence, it needs other cultures to help it understand 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 cannot 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-contained life is virtually impossible for most human beings in the modern, mobile and interdependent world. Nor does it mean that all cultures are equally rich and deserve equal respect, that each of them is good for its members, or that they cannot be compared and critically assessed. All it means is that "no culture is wholly worthless, that it deserves at least some respect because of what it means to its members and the creative energy it displays, that no culture is perfect and has a right to impose itself on others, and that cultures are best changed from within".⁸

Third, "every culture is internally plural and reflects a continuing conversation between its different traditions and strands of thought. This does not mean that it is

⁸ Ibid.

devoid of coherence and identity, but that its identity is plural, fluid and open. Cultures grow out of conscious and unconscious 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 constitution. Each carries bits of the other within itself and is never wholly *sui generis*. This does not mean that it has no power of self-determination and inner impulses, but rather that it is porous and subject to external influences which it assimilates in its now autonomous ways”.⁹

Parekh opines that a culture’s relation to itself shapes and is in turn shaped by its relation to others, and their internal and external pluralistic presuppose and reinforce each other. A culture cannot appreciate the value of others unless it appreciates the plurality within it; the converse is just as true. Closed cultures cannot and do not wish or need to talk to each other. Since each defines its identity in terms of its differences from others or what it is not, it feels threatened by them and seeks to safeguard its integrity by resisting their influences and even avoiding all contacts with them. A culture cannot be at ease with differences outside it unless it is at ease with its own internal differences. A dialogue between cultures requires that each should be willing to open itself up to the influences of and learn from others, and this presupposes

⁹ Ibid.

that it is self-critical and willing and able to engage in a dialogue with itself.

Thus, what Bhikhu Parekh might call a multiculturalist perspective is composed of the creative interplay of these three important and complementary insights, namely the cultural embeddedness of human beings, the inescapability and desirability of cultural plurality, and the plural and multicultural constitution of each culture. "When we view the world from its vantage point, our attitudes to ourselves and others undergo profound changes. All claims that a particular institution or way of thinking or living is perfect, the best, or necessitated by human nature itself appear incoherent and even bizarre, for it goes against our well-considered conviction that all ways of thought and life are inherently limited and cannot embody that full range of the richness, complexity and grandeur of human existence".¹⁰

Simply put, modern nation-states are composed of a variety of cultural communities. All these cultures have their own distinct cultural identities. These cultural identities are incommensurable in terms of their values. Nevertheless, in modern democratic polities the state is usually identified with the majority culture, while the communities that differ from it, are designated as minorities.¹¹ Analyzing the western liberal democracies,

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ This has been explained by both Will Kymlicka in *Multicultural Citizenship*, Clarendon Press Oxford, and Gurpreet Mahajan in 'Rethinking Multiculturalism', *Seminar*, December 1999.

advocates of multiculturalism argue that in these multiethnic and multinational societies, minority cultures and communities are disadvantaged in the public arena. They are disadvantaged through the cultural orientation and practice of the nation-state. The policy of the state favours the majority and at the same time place the minority communities at a disadvantaged. Multiculturalism, thus, locates cultural identity as a source of discrimination in a 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 force assimilation or exclusion. "This will create a more integrated society. As minorities receive institutional representation and their cultures survive and flourish, they will develop a sense of belonging and commitment to the state".¹²

¹² Joseph H Corens, 'Dimensions of Citizenship and National Identity in Canada', *The Philosophical Forum* vol. 28 No. 1-2, 1996-97 pp. 111-123. Also see Gurpreet Mahajan 'Rethinking Multiculturalism', *Seminar*, December 1999, pp. 58.

Thus, multiculturalism is an important value of democratic societies. And one should not be confused about the relationship between multiculturalism and 'democracy'. Gurpreet Mahajan puts "If multiculturalism and democracy appear together in history then this coexistence is neither fortuitous or accidental. Only democracy can reach out and explore formats of interaction that presume equality and respect. It is this concern for equality that precludes the possibility of democracy being even associated with majoritarianism- either of the political or cultural type. The dangers of political majoritarianism are by now widely accepted. They have become an assimilated ingredient in the metabolism of modern democracies. Multiculturalism adds to this awareness by sensitizing us to the dangers of cultural majoritarianism. In particular, it points to the way in which cultural majoritarianism disadvantages minorities, alienates them, enhances conflicts between communities and limits self understanding".¹³

However, some liberals have questioned the multicultural policy of providing group rights collectively to the minority community/communities as inconsistent with the liberal belief of equal treatment. They claim 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,

¹³ Gurpreet Mahajan, 'The Problem', *Seminar*, 1999 December, pp.12-13.

representation, etc. that the members of other groups do not have? To many people, the idea of group-differentiated rights seem to rest on a philosophy or world-view opposite to that of liberalism. It seems more concerned with the status of groups than with that of individuals. Moreover, it seems to treat individuals as the mere carriers of group identities and objectives, rather than as autonomous personalities capable of defining their own identity and goals in life. Group differentiated rights, in short, seem to reflect a collectivist or communitarian outlook, rather than the liberal belief in individual freedom and equality.¹⁴ Gurpreet Mahajan also puts, “while postmodernists 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 and pose a challenge to national unity. The feminists too are anxious that protection granted to cultural community practices may destroy the limited gains that the women’s movement has so far secured. Since most cultures endorse and permit control over women by men, preserving cultural practices may well become another way of allowing patriarchal domination in society. Group rights may, thus, assist in the continued subordination of women”.¹⁵ Rather, liberals argue that, cultural values can be promoted by individual rights. Thus, they outrightly

¹⁴ Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* p 34.

¹⁵ Gurpreet Mahajan, ‘Rethinking Multiculturalism’, *Seminar*, December 1999 pp. 56-61.

reject the idea that cultural specific group rights will further the principle of equality. Chandran Kukathas, opines “If rights were to be given to the disadvantaged,.....they should go to them regardless of group membership”.¹⁶ He also argues that group rights could not be defended successfully from the standpoint of liberal equality, the reason is 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”.¹⁷ What Kukathas says is that the claim for group rights weakens the case of liberal equality. His argument is based on the idea that such cases of group rights weakens the case of liberal equality among individuals across the country.

The other point on which liberals criticism of minority rights is based is that these group rights reinforce power hierarchy within the group. There are cultural

¹⁶ Chandran Kukathas, ‘Cultural Rights Again: A Rejoinder to Kymlicka’, *Political Theory*, November 1992, pp. 675-680.

¹⁷ Ibid.

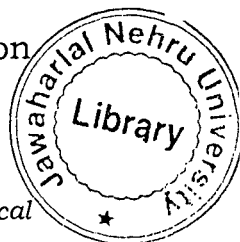
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practices, which deny the individual members of the community “the right to associate with outsiders and deny education”.¹⁸ Kukatahas gives the example of “Shunning” or, in extreme cases “banishing” those members who have violated community norms. The 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”.¹⁹ 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 put forward the view that group specific minority rights are inherently in conflict with individual rights. Many liberals hope that the new emphasis on

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Aylet Shachar, ‘On Citizenship and Multicultural Vulnerability’, *Political Theory*, February 2000, Sage Publication Inc. pp. 64-89.



'human rights' would resolve minority 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 exercised in the community with others and so provided protection for group life. Where these individual rights are firmly protected, liberals assume, no further rights needed to attribute to the members of specific ethnic or national minorities.

It means, simply put, once individuals have been treated as equals, with the respect and concern owed them as moral beings, there is no further obligation to treat the communities to which they belong as equals. One often cited example in this regard is the *Brown Vs Board of Education* case (1954). In this case, the Fourteenth Amendment of the American constitution, guaranteeing equal protection of the law to all its citizens, was used to strike down legislations that segregated blacks in the American South. The 'separate but equal' doctrine, which had governed racial segregation in the United States for sixty years, denied blacks the equal protection of the law. That case dealt solely with segregated school facilities, but it was a major impetus behind the removal of other segregationist legislation in the 1950s, the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts in the 1960s, and the

development of mandatory busing, 'head start', and affirmative action programmes in the 1970s; which in turn were catalyst for similar programmes to benefit other groups-Hispanics, women, the handicapped, etc.²⁰

Now, let me come to the defense of multicultural policy of group rights from the standpoint of liberal moral ontology. Advocates of multiculturalism point to state laws that make it more difficult for the members of the minority community to compete in the public arena, as well as those that discriminate against minority cultures. Respect for diversity, in their view, implies equal space and opportunity for different cultures to sustain themselves. Consequently, policies that homogenize populations by disallowing culturally specific ways of life and practices are seen as being hostile to minorities. The ultimate aim of multiculturalism, thus, is to create equality or condition for equal concern by adding the option of group specific rights to that of basic human rights, which is the ultimate claim of 'liberals'.

The greatest mistake of liberals, in arguing that the 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. There is, however, no tension at all. Rather, there is a symbiotic relationship between the two. Multiculturalism

²⁰ Will Kymlicka (1989) 'Liberalism and Cultural Membership' in *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, Oxford University Press Oxford pp.140-43.

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.²¹

The strongest defense of multiculturalism from the standpoint of liberal individualism comes from Will Kymlicka. He argues that 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 interests of each member of the community'.²²

History tells us that the formation of state always involved 'force'. This is true for every period of history. This force had always been used by those, who have power, over those who do not have power. It is also true that there is always conflict between powerful groups. Territorial boundaries were in the process constituted and

²¹ Gurpreet Mahajan, 'Rethinking Multiculturalism', *Seminar*, December 1999 pp. 56-61.

²² Will Kymlicka, (1989) *Liberalism, Community and the Culture*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

reconstituted to safeguard themselves from mutually destructive conflicts. By marking specific territorial boundaries the powerful groups could minimize their external conflicts and concentrate on their domination over the powerless within their respective territorial boundaries. Thus, since antiquity, there has been unequal competition not only between 'haves' and 'have-nots'²³ but also between cultural majority and minority. This sort of cultural domination continues still today, the age of liberal democracy. And it will continue until and unless we are able to maintain an equilibrium among various cultural groups within a nation-state. As long as this disequilibrium persists, the hope of liberal equality will never be fulfilled. Now the question is 'how can this equilibrium be promoted?'

The idea that the aim of equal concern will be fulfilled by simply giving equal rights to all individuals regardless of his/her community membership is a mistaken view. Because liberal democratic states cannot be truly neutral with respect to culture. Joseph Carens points out "for liberal democracy to work properly and to endure over time, certain norms, attitudes, and disposition must be widely shared among the population. Thus, liberal democracies require a liberal democratic political culture. This political culture is not neutral because it fits better with some ways of life and conception of the good man

²³ These terms 'haves' and 'have-nots' have same meaning as in Marxist parlance, haves-who have wealth and power and have-nots those who do not have these sources.

than with others. The liberal democratic culture required to sustain liberal democratic institutions is a generic 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 toward 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".²⁴ Since this cultural particularism is inevitable, it is to be accepted only when unavoidable and to be avoided as much as possible. He says, "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".²⁵ This point had also been explained by Kymlicka in his *Multicultural Citizenship*.²⁶ It has become increasingly

²⁴ Joseph Carens, 'Justice as Evenhandedness', *Seminar*, December 1999, pp.46-49.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Will Kymlicka (1995) *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 40-45.

clear that minority rights cannot be subsumed under the category of human rights. Traditional human rights standards are simply unable to resolve some of the most important and controversial questions relating to cultural minorities; which languages be recognized in the Parliament, bureaucracies, and courts? Should each ethnic or national group have publicly funded education in its mother tongue? Should internal boundaries be drawn so that cultural minorities form a majority within a local region? Should governmental powers be developed from the central level to more local or regional levels controlled by particular minorities, particularly on culturally sensitive issues of immigration, communication, and education? Should the political offices be distributed in accordance with a principle of national or ethnic proportionality? Should the traditional homelands of indigenous peoples be reserved for their benefit, and so protected from encroachment by settlers and resource developers? What are the responsibilities of minorities to integrate? What degree of cultural integration can be required of immigrants and refugees before they acquire citizenship? There are many other questions. The list could go on.

“The problem is not that traditional human rights doctrines give 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, or how powers

should be distributed between levels of government; the right to mobility does not tell us what is an appropriate immigration and naturization policy. These questions have been left to the unusual process of majoritarian 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".²⁷ Of course, individual rights can be and typically are used to sustain a wide range of social relationship. However, some form of cultural differences can only be accommodated through special legal or constitutional measures, above and beyond the common rights of citizenship. Let us consider one hypothetical case in which we have two cultural communities; one majority and the other minority. Let us assume that in both communities there are people who are relatively advanced. Though both the communities face certain problems, the natures of the problems they face are quite different. The advantaged section of minority community may face problems and obstacles in the path of their development, which advantaged people in the majority community may not necessarily face. This is so because certain cultural values of the majority community have been imposed upon the members of the minority community (For example- language). This gives them a

²⁷ Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, pp. 45.

constraint in the course of their development. For instance, the advantage of using my own mother tongue will not be with the man who studies in the language, which is not his mother tongue.

This happens in many liberal democracies. How can such types of disadvantages faced by members of minority community be solved by recognizing a single language in a multiethnic country. So, simply giving a single right to all individuals regardless of their community membership will not necessarily mean promotion of 'liberal equality'. It is just a means to sustain cultural majoritarianism. Not only this, minorities face many other problems – for example, the effect of market and political decisions made by majority, etc. What Kukathas views, when he said that “if rights were to be given to the disadvantaged...they should go to them regardless of group membership,”²⁸ is just an underestimation of the disadvantage face by the minorities. If the liberal equality means equal opportunity for all individuals, then this principle will be successful only when problems faced by people of minority communities are minimized to the level of problem face by the majority community. Simply giving equal universal rights for all will sustain this inequality of opportunity. The real purpose is to provide equal opportunity to all members of both the communities and therefore, providing equal opportunity may require special consideration for minority groups.

²⁸ Kukathas, (1992) *Cultural Rights Again*, pp. 675-680.

Now let me come to the question of the violation of human rights within the group. Multiculturalism does not allow or empower any group to violate human rights of the individuals within the group. Instead it seeks external protection for vulnerable groups against the larger society. Yes, there may be cultural practices, which violate human rights within the group. Multiculturalism, however, should not be mistaken as something, which ensures such practices. Rather, it is something, which recognizes and thereby permits a group to maintain certain cultural practices, which are acceptable to all the members and good for them. Of course, multicultural theorists have been against such basic human rights violation within the group. Kymlicka, by differentiating between internal restrictions and external protection, mentions, "...liberals can and should endorse certain external protections, where they promote fairness between groups, but should reject internal restrictions which limit the right of group members to question and revise traditional authorities and practices".²⁹

Thus, why we need multiculturalism or multicultural policy is not because of the need to continue power hierarchy within the group but the ultimate goal is to enhance the space of equal concern of all. The disadvantages face by certain sections of society, specially minorities cannot be rectified by providing only individual

²⁹ Will Kymlicka, (1995) *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, India, Oxford University Press, Delhi, pp. 37.

universal rights. That is why multiculturalism suggests group differentiated right for some- such as territorial autonomy, veto powers, guaranteed representation in central institutions, land claims, language rights, etc.

The problem confronting multiculturalism today is not merely accommodating diverse cultural groups within a state but developing an environment in which communities live together as equal partners in national political life. The question is 'how can this new kind of "universalism"³⁰ be achieved?' In dealing with this question, different theorists have argued from different perspectives. But most of the solutions developed by almost all the theorists are related with minority-majority conflicts, in which minorities are placed at a disadvantage. The case of Fiji studied by Carens, the case of Aboriginals in Canada, Australia and elsewhere by Kymlicka or the case of Asian and African minorities in England studied by Bikhu Parekh, all are related to situations where some minority groups are disadvantaged due to the policies of assimilation and segregation. But there are cases in which the conflicts may not necessarily be between majority and minority communities. In such cases, we have a different kind of problems. The conflicts in some cases are between various ethnic minorities within the state. Thus, in the first case, the nature of problem itself is different from the one, which the earlier theorists have written about. Second, the

³⁰ Universalism, here, means that universalism Gurpreet Mahajan talked about in her 'The Problem', *Seminar*, December 1999.

kinds of solutions adopted by these theorists would be hard to apply in the later case for a right solution. In view of these problems, we need a rethinking of the existing multicultural theories. There are many other limitations but the present study will be dealing with conflicts amongst multiethnic minority communities.

If we look at the kinds of ethnic diversity and the demands made by various ethnic communities, we could see that Manipur presents the right condition for creating a new set of theory on multiculturalism. This study will not merely be about majority-minority conflict and its possible solution. The study will be more about the conflicts presented by the existence of and plural demands of a large number of ethnic minority communities.

Chapter II

Nurturing Multiculturalism: Exploring Institutional Arrangements for Accommodating Minorities

In the previous chapter, I have explained a general viewpoint regarding 'what is multiculturalism?' I also tried to bridge the gap between 'liberalism' on the one hand and 'multiculturalism' on the other. That explanation was important because many a time the value of multiculturalism has been pitted against the idea of individual freedom. However, I hope, this problem is almost settled because multiculturalism is thought to be a 'virtue' which can reconcile individual value with community value. It's just like a means to create a condition which can fulfill the principle, 'all for one and one for all'¹.

Nevertheless, there is another problem encircling the theories of multiculturalism. The problem, perhaps the biggest in multiculturalism, is about developing the kinds of environment for proper solution to the conflicts arising out of ethnic diversity. And this is the main concern of my work.

If we want to address this very problem, we need, first of all, to understand the kinds of ethnic minorities (diversities) and various arrangements that have been explored to provide a harmonious relationship between or

¹ It means that both individual rights and community values are promoted and make them complementary to each other.

among them. Thus the purpose of the present chapter will be to unfold the kinds of minorities and the limits of governmental arrangements to deal with ethnic conflicts.

For a clear understanding, I will divide the chapter into two subparts. The first part will deal with the kinds of minorities and minority rights provided to solve the problem. The second will focus on the question of the principles on which provisions of minority rights are to be based. Let us start with the first:

2.1. Classification of Ethnic Minorities and Corresponding Rights:

We should acknowledge the fact that classification of all ethnic minorities is a very difficult task. There are thousands of distinct minority ethnic groups. In this context the recent work of Will Kymlicka² deserves appreciation. He successfully tried to categorize ethnic groups existing mainly in Western and Eastern European countries. I will present here a classification of ethnic groups mainly based on his classification and at the same time I will try to discuss the demands of these ethnic groups and various policy options developed by Western democracies. I will also touch upon the limits of such policy options.

Kymlicka discusses five types of ethno cultural groups that are found within the Western democracies³. Let me explain them in succession.

² Will Kymlicka, 2002, *Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

³ Ibid.

A. National Minorities :

These are the groups that formed complete and functioning societies on their historic homeland prior to being incorporated into a larger state. National Minorities can be subdivided into two categories: 'sub-state nations' and 'Indigenous people'. However, the contrast between the two is not precise. The most common demand of National Minorities is the maintenance of their own languages, so as to be able to live and work in their own cultures. They demand to maintain or regain their own schools, courts, media, political institutions, and so on. To achieve these, they demand some form of autonomy. At the extreme this may involve claims to outright secession, but more usually it involves some form of regional autonomy. Moreover, it is increasingly clear that substantial form of self-government can be achieved within the boundaries of a larger state, and so there is a growing interest in exploring the other forms of self-government, such as federalism. But there are cases in which these national minorities seek to use the same tools that majority uses to promote their nation building. For example, they seek to control over the language and curriculum of schooling in their region of the country, language of the government employment, the requirements of immigration and nationalization, and the drawing of entire boundaries. How Western democracies have responded to such demands?

For both prudential and moral reasons, an increasing number of Western democracies that contain National Minorities accept that they are 'Multination states' rather than 'nation-states'. And this multination character is

typically manifested in some form of territorial autonomy for the national minority, and which may be explicitly affirmed in the country's law and constitution⁴. In some countries, this shift to territorial autonomy has been achieved by adopting a federal system, since federalism allows the creation of regional political units, controlled by the national minority, with substantial and constitutionally protected powers of self government. Countries that have adopted federalism to accommodate minority rights include Canada (for the Quebecois), Belgium (for the Flemish), Spain (for the Basque, Catalans and Galicians), and Switzerland (for the French speaking and Italian speaking minorities)⁵. Indeed, recent surveys of Ethno-nationalist conflict around the world show that self government arrangements diminish the likelihood of violent conflict, while refusing or rescinding self government rights is likely to escalate the level of conflict⁶. In these multination federations the boundaries and powers of one or more sub units are defined with the intention of enabling a national minority to exercise self government.

There may be some cases in which federalism in its technical sense will not work due to geographic or demographic reasons. In these cases we see emergence of various quasi-federal forms of territorial autonomy. For

⁴ Will Kymlicka, (2002) *Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 29.

⁵ Idid.

⁶ Ted Gurr, (1993) *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethno Political Conflict*, Institute of Peace Press, Washington, DC. The same view is available in his (2000) 'Ethnic Warfare on the Wane' *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 79 No. 3, pp. 52-64. Also in Hannum, Hurst (1990) 'Autonomy, Sovereignty and Self determination'. *Adjudication of Conflicting Rights*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, E.A. and Ruth Lapidoth, (1996) *Autonomy: Flexible Solutions to Ethnic Conflicts*, US Institute of Peace Press Washington, DC,

example, Britain has recently adopted a quasi-federal system of devolution to Scotland and Wales, which now have their own legislative assemblies. And while Italy and Finland are not federations, they have adopted special forms of territorial autonomy for the German speakers in South Tyrol; and for the Swedes in Aland Islands. In all of these cases, territorial autonomy enables National Minorities to establish and govern their own public institutions, often operating in their language, including schools, universities, courts, and regional parliaments. Indeed, it is important to stress that these multinational federations are, by any reasonable criteria, successful. They not only manage the conflicts arising from their competing national identities in a peaceful and democratic way but have also secured a high degree of economic prosperity and individual freedom for their citizens.

B. Immigrants:

These are the groups formed by decisions of individuals and families to leave their original homeland and migrate to another society, often leaving their friends and relatives behind. This decision is typically made for economic reasons, although sometimes for political reasons also, to move to a freer or more democratic country⁷. Over time, and with the second and subsequent generations born in the new country of residence, they give rise to ethnic communities with varying degrees of internal cohesions and organizations. They arrived in a particular

⁷ Will Kymlicka, (2002) *Western Political theory and Ethnic relations in Eastern Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford pp 29-35.

country under an immigration policy which gives them the right to become citizens after a relatively short period of time subject only to minimal conditions such as learning the official language, and knowing something about the country's history and political institutions.

Immigrants have never resisted majority nation-building campaigns to integrate them into the mainstream society. However, what immigrants have tried to do is to renegotiate the terms of integrations. They are demanding a more tolerant or 'multicultural' approach to integration that would allow and indeed support immigrants to maintain various aspects of their ethnic heritage even as they integrate into common institutions operating in the majority language. Immigrants insist that they should be free to maintain some of their old customs regarding food, dress, recreation, religion, and to associate with each other to maintain these practices. This should not be seen as unpatriotic or 'un-American'⁸. Moreover, the institutions of the larger should be adopted to provide greater recognition and accommodation of these ethnic identities, for example, schools and other public institutions should accommodate their religious holidays, dress, dietary restrictions and so on.

Liberal democracies have historically resisted these demands. Immigrants were expected to assimilate to existing cultural norms, and, over time, become indistinguishable from native born citizens in their speech, dress, leisure activities, cuisine, family size, identities and so on. To be too visibly 'ethnic' in one's public behavior was

⁸ Ibid

seen as unpatriotic. This strongly assimilationist policy was seen as necessary to ensure that immigrants become loyal and productive members of the society. However, beginning in the 1970s it was increasingly recognized that this assimilationist model is unrealistic, unnecessary and unjust. Today the move towards a multicultural model of immigrant integration is very widespread in the west. The first country to officially adopt such a 'multiculturalism' policy at the national level was Canada in 1971⁹. But it has since been adopted in many other countries from Australia and New Zealand to Sweden, Britain, and the Netherlands¹⁰.

However, western political theorists have not yet developed "a fully satisfactory theory of fair terms of integration"¹¹. The question is not whether immigrants have given us a compelling reason to diverge from the norm of ethno cultural neutrality, but rather how can we ensure that state policies aimed at pursuing immigrants to integrate are fair^{12,13}.

C. Isolationist Ethno Religious Groups:

There are some small groups which voluntarily isolate themselves from the larger society, and avoid participating in politics or civil society. In fact their theology requires them to avoid all contact with the modern

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ The Report of Commission on the Future of Multi Ethnic Britain' *The Park Report*, October 2000.

¹¹ Will Kymlicka, (2002) *Western Political theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford pp 29-35.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ We can see discussions of the claims of immigrant groups, and their relation to liberal democratic norms in Carens (2000), Spinner (1994), Bauback (1994) and Parekh (2000).

world, for instance - Hutterites, Amish, or Hasidic Jews. They actually emigrated to escape persecution for their religious belief¹⁴.

In order to avoid contact with the modern world, and to maintain their traditional way of life, these groups seek exemption from military or jury duty, since these would implicate them in the operation of “Worldly” governments. And they have demanded exemption from compulsory education laws, in order to ensure that their children are not exposed to corrupting influences – for example, they seek the right to take their children out of school before the legal age of 16, and to be exempted from certain parts of the core curriculum which teach about the lifestyle of the modern world. It is said that since they do not egregiously harm people inside the group, most democratic states have historically been quite accepting of these demands. They do not abuse their children sexually, do not attempt to impose their views on outsiders, and members are legally free to leave. “This toleration is typically justified either on the grounds of freedom of religion, or on the grounds that those groups were given specific promises of toleration when they entered the country historical premises which were not given to other immigrants”¹⁵. Jeff Spinner says that these groups want to be ‘partial citizens’ because they voluntarily waive both the rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship¹⁶.

¹⁴ Will Kymlicka, (2002) *Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford pp 29-35.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Jeff Spinner, (1994) *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of The Riel Rebellion*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, pp. 34-55.

D. Metics:

This is actually a diverse category of people, including irregular migrants, for example, those who entered the country illegally or overstayed their visa. And they are, therefore, not legally domiciled, such as many North-Americans in Italy – and temporary migrants – for example, those who entered as refugees seeking temporary protection or as ‘guest workers’, such as Turks in Germany. Michael Walzer calls these groups ‘metics’- that is long term residents who are nonetheless excluded from the polis¹⁷. Regularization of their status as permanent residents, and to gain access to citizenship have been their most basic claims. “They want, in effect, to be able to follow the immigrant path to integration into the mainstream society, even though they were not initially admitted as immigrants”¹⁸.

Some countries, particularly the traditional immigrant countries, have grudgingly accepted these demands. But other countries, particularly those which do not think of themselves as immigrant countries, have resisted these demands. In some German provinces (Länder), for example, until the 1980s, the government kept Turkish children out of German classes, and instead set up separate classes for Turks, often taught in Turkish by teachers imported from Turkey with a curriculum focused on preparing the children for life in Turkey. Kymlicka argues that “this was called ‘multiculturalism’,

¹⁷ Michael Walzer (1983) *Spheres of Justice* (Basic books, New Yorks, NY).

¹⁸ Will Kymlicka, (2002) *Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford pp 29-35.

but unlike multiculturalism in Australia and Canada, it was not seen as a way of enriching or supplementing German citizenship. Rather, it was adopted precisely because these children were not seen as German citizenship. It was a way of saying that these children do not really belong here, that their true 'home' is in Turkey. It was a way of reaffirming that they are aliens, not citizens. Multiculturalism without the offer of citizenship is almost invariably a recipe for, and rationalization of exclusion"¹⁹.

But, it is increasingly recognized that this approach to metics is not viable, and is both morally and empirically flawed. It has become clear that metics who have lived in a country for several years are highly unlikely to go home, even if they have only a precarious legal status. This is particularly true if the metics have married and have children in the country. At this point, it is their new country, not their country of origin, which has become their 'home'. Indeed, it may be the only home that metics' children and grandchildren know. Once they have settled, founded a family, and started raising their children, nothing short of expulsion is likely to get metics to return to their country of origin. So a policy based on the hope of voluntary return is unrealistic. Moreover, it endangers the larger society. For the unlikely result of such a policy is to create a permanently disenfranchised, alienated, and racially-defined underclass.

However, there is an increasing trend in western democracy, even in non-immigrant countries, towards

¹⁹ Will Kymlicka, (2002) *Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford pp 29-35.

adopting amnesty programs for illegal immigrants, and granting citizenship to guest workers and their children. In effect, long settled metics are increasingly viewed as if they were legal immigrants, and are allowed and encourage to follow the immigrants path to integration.

This is not only prudent, but morally required. For it violates the very idea of a liberal democracy to have groups of long terms residents who have no right to participate in determining that authority. To have permanent residents who are subject to the state, but unable to vote, is to create a kind of caste-system which undermines the democratic credentials of the states²⁰.

E. African-American:

One final group which has been very important in recent American theorizing about ethic relations is the blacks or 'African-American' who are descended from the African slaves brought to the united states between the seventeen and nineteen centuries. Even though slavery was abolished and segregation laws dismantled, it is said that black remain subject to pervasive informal discrimination in hiring and housing, and they remain disproportionately concentrated in the lower class, and in poor neighborhoods. Their case is very different from that of metics. They are effectively denationalized – they were denied membership in the American nation. "The legacy of

²⁰ The same view can be had from Baubock 1994; Carens 1989; Walzer 1983; Rubio-Marin 2000.

centuries of slavery and segregation has created barriers to integration which immigrants simply do not face”.²¹

African-Americans have raised a complex, unique, and evolving set of demands. The civil rights movement in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s was seen by many of its proponents as enabling Blacks to follow the immigrant path of integration, through a more rigorous enforcement of anti-discrimination laws. Those African Americans who were skeptical about the possibility of following the immigrant path to integration, however, have pursued the opposite track of redefining Blacks as a ‘nation’, and promoting a form of Black Nationalism. Much of the recent history of African-American political mobilization can be seen as a struggle between these two competing projects.

It is increasingly recognized that a *sui generis* approach will have to be worked out for African-Americans, involving a variety of measures. These may include historical compensation for post injustice, special assistance in integration (such as, affirmative actions), guaranteed political representation (for example, through redrawing electoral boundaries to create black-majority districts), and support for various forms of Black self-organization (for example subsidies for historical black colleges, and for black-focused education).²² The demands may seem to pull in different directions, since some promote integration while others seem to reinforce segregation, but each responds to a different part of the complex and

²¹ Will Kymlicka, (2002) *Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford pp 29-35.

²² See Will Kymlicka, (2002) *Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

contradictory reality which African-Americans find themselves in. The long term aim is to promote integration of African-Americans into the American nation, but it is recognized that this is a long-term process that can only work if existing Black communities and institutions are strengthened. A degree of short-term separateness and colour consciousness is needed to achieve the long-term goal of an integrated and colour-blind society.²³

That was the broad classification of ethnocultural groups that are found within the Western democracies. Now let me come to the question of relevance or the applicability of this classification and demands to the other parts of the globe. Like Western democracies, the state in other parts are using various tools of nation-building to protect and diffuse a dominant societal culture. The claims for minority rights, again, are not necessarily evidence that minorities have become aggressive and assertive, but rather can be seen as defensive responses to the threat posed by assertions of majority nation-building. In this sense, the basic framework which Western political theorists are now using to understand minority rights seems broadly applicable to some other parts of the globe specially to Eastern and Central Europe²⁴. Eastern and Central European countries (ECE) are also using many of the same nation-building tools Western democracies use.²⁵

²³ The states and claims of African-Americans, and their connection to liberal democratic norms have been discussed in Spinner 1994, Gutmann and Appiah 1996; Brooks 1996; Cochran 1999; and Kymlicka 2001; ch. 9

²⁴ Will Kymlicka, (2002) *Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford pp. 40-53.

²⁵ We can see policies in Latvia (Mitrofanov1998); Estonia (Pettai 1998) and Ethnobarometer 1999; 219-21 and 243-5 for Romania and Slovakia; Jaworsky 1998 for Ukraine.

So far as national minorities are concerned, the claims of territorially-concentrated national minorities in ECE are broadly similar to those of national minorities in the West. Indeed some of the same mechanism used to accommodate minority nationalism in the West, such as federal or quasi-federal forms of territorial autonomy could be used in ECE.

However, there are factors not present in the West and due to these factors the adoption of multination federation in ECE countries is complicated. The most important factor is that many national minorities in ECE have a kin-state nearby that might hope to join or rejoin and so are potentially irredentist. This is quite different from national minorities in Western Europe, most of whom do not have a neighbouring kin-state. The problem in such cases is not just that minority may have a longing to rejoin their kin-state, but also the potential for political and even military intervention by the kin-state in order to 'protect' the interest of their people. "In some cases, the national minority may be willing to be guided by its kin-state".²⁶ In such cases finding a stable *modus vivendi* with a local national minority is difficult. This and other factors have encouraged three interrelated assumptions which are now widely accepted by ECE countries²⁷. (a) That minorities are disloyal, not just in the sense that they lack loyalty to the state-that is equally true of secessionists in Quebec or Scotland but in the stronger sense that they collaborated with former oppressors, and continue to collaborate with current enemies or potential enemies; (b) that a strong and

²⁶ Kymlicka, Will, (2002) *Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp.45-53.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

stable state requires weak and disempowered minorities. Put another way, ethnic relations are seen as a zero-sum game: anything that benefits the minority is seen as a threat to the majority; and (c) that the treatment of minorities is above all a question of national security²⁸.

Given these factors, the prospects for federalism in ECE are very slim, at least in the foreseeable future. Russia is the only country that voluntarily adopted a form of multinational federalism that grants significant territorial autonomy to several national minorities. But in all other countries territorial autonomy has been strongly resisted. We also need to remember that multinational federalism is not widely accepted in Russia.²⁹ Yet it is not clear what the alternative mechanism is for accommodating minority nationalism. Mihalikova³⁰ also says that while majority Slovaks reject the idea of local autonomy for the ethnic Hungarians, they offer 'no coherent vision of the future' as an alternative.

In the case of many smaller and more dispersed national minorities, and for some groups subject to prolonged and severe assimilationist pressures—such as the Turks in Bulgaria. For such groups, some more creative alternatives are needed. For example Russia adopted in 1996 a system of 'National Cultural Autonomy' for national minorities which cannot benefit from the Russian system

²⁸ Examples and discussions of this disloyalty/security/fifth-column view, are in Kamusella and Sullivan 1999; pp. 179 (re Germans in Poland); Barcz 1992; pp. 87; Andreescu 1997 (re Hungarians in Romania); Mihalikora 1998; pp. 154-7 (re Hungarians in Slovakia); Nelson 1998; Solchanyk 1994 (re Russian in Ukrain); Offe 1993; pp. 23-4.

²⁹ For a detailed discussion of how various post-soviet countries have approached issues of territorial autonomy, see Kolsto's commentary in Part 2; Laitin 1998; pp. 95; Solchanyk 1994s.

³⁰ Silvia Mihalikova (1998) 'The Hungarian Minority in Slovakia: Conflict over Autonomy in Opabki (ed.), pp. 148-64.

of multination federalism, that is, groups which are too small or dispersed to form a local majority in a territorial sub-unit of the Russian federation, or for members of larger national minorities who live outside their self-governing homeland. The National Cultural Autonomy Act allows national groups, wherever they reside, to organize and administer their own publicly funded schools in their mother tongue, to establish newspapers and media, and to address the organs of government. This conception of non-territorial autonomy which echoes Otto Bauer's theory of non-territorial autonomy in the old Habsburg empire-provides an interesting supplement to familiar Western models of minority rights. Unlike Western models of multination federalism; it does not involve territorial autonomy; but unlike Western models of immigrant multiculturalism, it involves a considerable degree of institutional separateness, self-administration, and extensive mother-tongue language rights³¹.

We can very briefly look at the question of Russians in the Baltic. This is the case of the Russians who, before 1989, move to the other parts of the Soviet Union. They did not think of themselves as a 'minority' or as 'immigrants' to another country. Instead they saw themselves as moving around within a single country. Hence they expected to find and did find, a full set of Russian - language institutions and services wherever they moved in the Soviet

³¹ Will Kymlicka, (2002) *Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford pp 29-35.

Union, and they increasingly came to see the whole of the Soviet Union as their 'homeland', not just Russia³².

The problems came up when the erstwhile Soviet Union was disintegrated into various smaller states. These ethnic Russians became a minority within newly independent and nationalizing states. While they gradually accepted the fact that they are a minority, they still don't think of themselves as an immigrant minority. Rather they expect and demand to maintain the full set of Russian language institutions that they are accustomed to. Hence they are demanding the sorts of rights which are typically demanded by national minorities – not just citizenship, but also to the continued existence and funding of separate schools, institutions and local autonomy. However, for some members of the larger society these settlers are more like illegal immigrants, who had no right to enter in the first place, since they came as a result of military occupation by the red army.

There are other groups called Crimean Tartars and Cossacks³³. Crimean Tartars suffered a wholesale communal deportation from the Crimea in World War II. This group is different both from national minorities in the West as well as from most indigenous peoples. The deportation of these peoples was recent enough to make return a viable option. Yet, in the meantime all of their land and property has passed into the hands of settlers, for whom Crimea is now the only home they know. The distinctive issue facing the Tartars, therefore, is how to

³² Laitin (1998) *Identify in Formation : The Russian Speaking Population in the New Abroad* Cornell University Press Ithaca, NY : pp. 67-9

³³ Kymlika 2002

deal with the issues of return from deportation, and compensation for historical injustice. There is nothing in the west, in theory and practice, to answer these questions.

What about Cossacks? They see themselves as true-Russians and have adopted the label of a 'nation'. Their two important demands are (1) 'rehabilitation' and official recognition after many years in which any manifestation of Cossack identity was repressed by the communists, as well as restitution or compensation for expropriated property; (2) gaining (or regaining) various group-specific rights within mainstream Russian institutions, such as the army, the economy, and the parliament. These rights include tax credits, guaranteed political representation, and the equivalent of an affirmative action programme in the military³⁴.

As Opalski opines, the problem with this group is that they define themselves as dominant over other groups. They think that this is the only way in which they are able to maintain a coherent sense of distinct identity and group organization³⁵. Kymlicka says that "in so far as this is true, it obviously makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile group-specific rights for the Cossacks with liberal-democratic norms"³⁶.

The recent work by Will Kymlicka, specially his categorization of different minority groups and the analysis of their corresponding demands, deserves appreciation.

³⁴ Opalski, Magda (1998) 'The Cossack Revival: Rebuilding an Old Identity in a New Russia' in Magda Opalski (ed.) *Managing Diversity in Plural Societies: Minorities, Migration and Nation Building in Post Communist Europe*, Forum Eastern Europe, Ottawa, 75-103.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Will Kymlicka, (2002) *Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford pp 29-35.

However, most of the problems of ethnic conflicts remain unresolved. Neither western political theorists nor Kymlicka himself propounded a viable solution for such conflicts in Eastern and Central European countries (ECE), for instance, specially because of the fact that the policies developed in the Western democracies cannot be applied in these countries.

Besides this problem of inapplicability, we face another problem. There are groups which cannot be included in any one of the classifications given by Kymlicka. Not only this, there are ethnic conflicts nature of which are different from those existing in western or ECE countries. I will not explain these different sort of diversities and conflicts right away here. I will take up in the next chapter. Instead, I will draw my attention towards the grounds or principles on which provisions of minority rights are to be based.

2.2 Basic Principles of Group Rights:

Whenever we think of policies to deal with multicultural problems we need to take into account three basic principles. These three principles are

- (A) Survival of Cultures;
- (B) Promotion of basic Democratic Values; and
- (C) Equality between Groups.

Let me explain each of these principles in detail.

A. Survival of Cultures:

I have already mentioned that multiculturalism cherishes diversity. Giving due recognition to diverse

cultures is a precondition in the creation of space for equal citizenship. Even contemporary liberals argue that human beings are culturally embedded in the sense that “they grow up and live within a culturally structured world and organized their lives and social relations in terms of a culturally derived system of meaning and significance”³⁷. Different cultures represent different system of meaning and visions 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 cannot 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. Somewhere 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 options 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

³⁷ Bikhu Parekh, ‘What is Multiculturalism’, *Seminar* 1999 December. pp. 14-17.

they fit into some pattern of activities which is culturally recognized as a way of leading one's life³⁸. According to Gurpreet Mahajan community identity and public domain are two inseparable values. She says that community membership influences their predicaments and structures the way other people relate to them. As such, cultural community identities are important. They define, at least in part, who are.....community membership cannot be completely effaced from public domain, nor can they be restricted to the private sphere alone"³⁹

Thus any kind of multicultural policy should aim at preserving cultures rather than destroying 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. But I don't mean that all cultural values are good and to be promoted unqualified. There are limits and permissibility⁴⁰.

B. 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 be done at the cost of basic democratic values. Both are equally important and

³⁸ This explanation is most significantly done in his (kymlicka) *Liberalism, Community and Culture*-1989, pp. 164-65.

³⁹ Gurpreet Mahajan, (2002) *The Multicultural Path*, Issues of Diversity and Discrimination in Democracy, New Sage Publication, New Delhi, pp 38.

⁴⁰ For limits and permissibility see Bikhu Parekh's 'Equality, Fairness and Limits of Diversity', *Innovation*, vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 289-308.

therefore, there is a need qualification of one value by other. As we have seen, one of the most important basis of criticizing group rights is the possible violation of basic human rights. On many occasions we find of basic democratic values in the name of preserving culture. As I mentioned above, since most cultures endorse and control over women by men, preserving cultural practices may well become another way of violating their rights and of allowing patriarchal domination in society. Group rights may, thus, assists in the continue subordination of women. There are many other examples, for instance, the practice of “shunning” or sometimes “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 rights including freedom of speech, association, and conscience.⁴¹ 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 looks very conflictual. It will be wrong to impose certain cultural practices upon individual members against their will. Thus, all

⁴¹ Kymlicka; *Individual and Community Rights*, in Baher (ed.) *Group rights*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1994, pp. 17-28.

multicultural policies should be based on both the values namely, individual rights and cultural values.

(C) Equality Between Groups: This is the final principle. 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 everyone 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 cultures. 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 some individuals' freedom 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 any policy which misses any one of these principles. Let us take the case of Fiji as an example:

There are two major communities in Fiji, one, the majority community of Indian Fijians and the other, the native Fijian minority community⁴². Historically, Indian Fijians arrived at Fiji as plantation workers on contract during colonial period. I don't think that we need to analyze the problems of citizenship of Indian Fijians. Now they have been recognized as citizens of Fiji. And from both moral and historical perspective, my argument about the case is that they have equal rights to citizenship as must was the native Fijians do. I think there is no point in talking about first class and second class citizenship regarding Fijian Indians' citizenship status. So, I will directly come to the question of land policy and separate institution of native Fijians.

As Carens mentions, Fiji has a constitution that guarantees native Fijians a significant majority of the seats in parliament, eliminates cross voting, and strengthen the power of the chiefly establishment in the senate. Another feature Fijian society is that of so call traditional Fijian culture of collective ownership of land. The main idea is that these features are crucial for the survival of the native Fijian culture. We need a deep analysis of each of these features. First, let me take up the case of land policy.⁴³

⁴² Joseph Carens, 'Democracy and Respect for Difference: The Case of Fiji' University of Michigan, *Journal of Law Reform*, 1992, vol. 25, No. 3 pp. 547-631. It explains the case of Fiji.

⁴³ Ibid.

Carens mentions three points in defense of the policy on land ownership; first this arrangement helps Fijians in protecting one of their vital interests. Without these arrangement Fijians would have given up ownership of their land without receiving any substantial long term benefit in return without foreseeing in the consequences for their collective way of life. Second, Fijians' dominance in this area (of land ownership) is balanced by the dominance Indians have achieved in other areas of economic life. If native Fijians own most of the business and occupied most of the key professional and white collar positions as well, then it would be easier to make the case that these form of 'cultural preservation' was nearly a means of perpetuating unjust privilege. Third, despite the erosion of traditional culture, it appears that the land is still central to the native Fijian self understanding. The attachment to the land is not merely instrumental; it is constitutive of native-Fijian identity.⁴⁴

Let's try to find out some of the limitations in Carens' argument Stephic Lawson argues that the system of inalienable land ownership with the right held in a particular communal unit was very much a odd with traditional practices.⁴⁵ First land had not been inalienable prior to the colonial regime. Second, the rigidities imposed by this arrangement have led to significant inequalities in ownership between different units because of variation in fertility and mortality among units. There is some point in this last argument but Lawson would be wrong to say that

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Lawson, *Supra* Note 10: 147-58.

this kind of special communal arrangement is erroneous since it had not been a traditional practice. Every culture has evolved and changed. Even though a particular practice had not been there with a culture in earlier days, it may after sometime, through the process of evolution, become a part of that culture. One example can be this Fijian case itself. In this case inalienability of land ownership becomes crucial to the survival of their culture. We should not forget that the principle of survival of culture cannot be promoted at the cost of 'equality between groups'.

First point, I want to mention here is that this land policy was, at the beginning, aimed at protecting the interest of native Fijians against European encroachment. Let us remember one important fact that the Europeans were foreigners, who came to make profit. But the problem, now, is not between foreigners and residence but between permanent residents. The Fijian Indians cannot be treated as immigrants or second class citizens. Historically as well morally they are very much citizens of Fiji. On the basis of cultural differences there can be different norms of governance for different cultural communities but not on the basis of "Fiji for Fijians" type of claims. This claim depicts Fijian Indians as immigrants. This is not a case of preserving identity but a case of undermining equal citizenship which multiculturalism never accepts.

The second point I want to advance here is that in terms of population they are the minority but in terms of land holding they (native Fijians) occupy 82 percent of total

land⁴⁶. This is a disproportionate land holding. As Carens puts, “as land is crucial to native Fijians it is equally crucial to Fijian Indians”⁴⁷. But it does not mean that neither of them will have such policy of collective land holding and inalienability in its form. Any one of them (according to their cultural practice) can maintain such practice⁴⁸. However, we need to acknowledge one important thing that even though it is crucial to the Fijian culture, this practice is very much a problem for Fijian Indians. Whatever native Fijians want to do, they must do it after providing equal space for others. Lawson notes, “one major consequences of the policy on the inalienability of Fijian land is that the Indian population and their descendents were doomed by it to become and remain a landless majority in their adopted country”⁴⁹. If land is crucial to the wellbeing of the native Fijians, it is also crucial to the wellbeing of the Fijian Indians. Their insecurity about land is one of their central long-standing complaints. Had Fiji’s case been a case of conflict among various cultural group (like that in Manipur⁵⁰), it would be a problem to sustain such practice of collective land holding due to large number of communities and limited land. Since, however, this kind of land holding arrangement is crucial to the culture of native Fijians, and land not so limited, we may think of certain modification to the system and assure them of their practice of collective land holding. This may be done by redrawing the territory. The mere fact that

⁴⁶ Carens.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ It is more practice than policy.

⁴⁹ Lawson, *Supra* Notes 10, pp. 147-58.

⁵⁰ I will discuss this case of Manipur in the next chapter.

Indians have achieved success in other areas of economic life does not give a sound reason for violating their land right. Their success owes more to their effort than anything else. They also had a very humble start.

Altogether then, even though the present form of 'land right' is good for native Fijians; this sets a great limitation against the interest of Fijian Indians who are as much citizens as the native Fijians. It is truly against the principle of equality.

The other feature of the Fijian society is the system of separate institution. Carens' argument about this case is really satisfactory and the system itself looks quite promising. Let me start with certain objections put forward by Lawson⁵¹. According to him, chiefly authority in its current form is not a deeply rooted, long standing element of a common Fijian culture. It is relatively recent addition created largely to serve the needs of the colonial regime. Again he says that ordinary Fijians do accept chiefly hierarchy as central to the Fijian way of life, but only because the chiefs have established and maintained their position through fear, superstition, and propaganda. However, Carens supports such system as it is important for the members of the Fijian community⁵². According to him, the native Fijians treated the continuity of this system as significant; it did much to preserve their indigenous culture and way of life. Prohibition of the native Fijians from engaging in indentured labour on the plantation was justified on the ground that the departure of men for the plantation would destroy the communal system of labour

⁵¹ Lawson, *Supra* Notes 10, pp. 147-58.

⁵² Carens (1992).

that made Fijian village life possible. If one cares about the wellbeing of the ordinary people, Fijian communalism is much better than liberal capitalism⁵³.

One important point we need to consider is whether this Fijian system does affect the interest of the other community. There is little proof of this system limiting interest of the other community, namely, the Fijian Indians. The goal of the separate institution is the protection of native Fijians rather than dominating the Fijian Indians. The senate did not initiate legislation, and the veto power only affected the areas most relevant to the protection of native Fijian culture. In short, here is an institutional arrangement specially designed for the preservation of culture-potentially a minority culture, depending on demographic development that seems morally justifiable to me⁵⁴.

As far as the relationship between communities vis-à-vis the Fijian institution is concerned, the system looks quite good. But let's also consider the relationship between the chiefs and other ordinary individuals within the native Fijian community. Critics argue that since chiefly authority is acquired as a hereditary status and requires difference from commoners towards chief, it stands in deep and ineradicable tensions with the democratic ideas that the legitimacy of public authority should rest on the choice of the governed and with the ethos of equal citizenship required to sustain democratic institutions. Michael Walzer supports the idea that basic human rights set some

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

limitations to what may be done to people in the name of culture⁵⁵. Then the question is whether these basic individual human rights are protected in the native-Fijian system.

Carens says that chiefs are more responsive and responsible to the people, less exploitative and domineering. The main argument which Carens put forward is that the reason why we should respect native Fijians culture and attempt to preserve it is that this is what the native Fijians themselves want. That argument itself is built on democratic principle, people are entitled to get the kind of public policies and institutions they want within limits. It respects individual freedom and political rights. Michael Walzer defends it as just as a hypothetical caste society in which the principles of hierarchy and caste differentiation are accepted by all of the members of the society including those in the lower caste. And one more point I want to mention here is that though it gives some limitation to individuals within the community, it is necessary for creating a balance or equilibrium between the two major communities. When there is such a tension between the principle of democratic values and that of equality between groups, the latter will be preferred if the limitation on the individual right is not that much serious.

Thus, the system of chiefly authority is very much in tune with the three principles which I mentioned in the beginning. This Fijian culture is deserved to be protected and preserved because it is Fijians' and they want to preserve it, and because it is an admirable culture that

⁵⁵ Michael Walzer, *Supra Notes* vol. 266 No. 3.pp. 3-15.

provides meaning and structure to the lives of the people who participate in it.

This Fijian case is just an example. There may be many other cases with different social structure and political system. As mentioned earlier, even the classification of the ethnic cannot have a universal application. But one important point is that each ethnic group has its own demand and necessity. Therefore making any kind of multicultural policy should take into account their specific needs and demands. Again we find that there is a complex relationship between individual rights and community values. And the purpose of multiculturalism is to reconcile them and develop an environment which can promote 'peaceful-co-existence'. In fine, whenever we think of making multicultural policy we should consider the three principles viz. A) survival of cultures; B) promotion of basic individual rights and C) equality.

In the next chapter I will discuss another unique case. This is about the ethnic conflicts and present social structure of Manipur. Again, in this case also I will try to argue on the basis of these three principles of multiculturalism.

Chapter III

Cultural Diversity and Inter-Community Conflicts in Manipur

In the previous chapter I tried to unfold the complexity of ethnic diversity in its various forms; its classification and the kinds of arrangements for a harmonious relationship among them. I discussed the classification of ethnic groups mainly on the basis of what Will Kymlicka has done in his recent work. Along with the classification, I discussed various policy options developed by Western democracies and their limits.

Kymlicka has identified five major ethnic minority groups—the *National Minority* whose important demands are the maintenance of their own self government institutions; the *immigrants* who are demanding a more tolerant or multicultural approach to integration that would allow and indeed support immigrants to maintain various aspects of their ethnic heritage even as they integrate into common institutions operating in the majority language; the *isolationist Ethno-religious* groups who voluntarily isolate themselves from the larger society; the *Metics* whose basic claims have been the regularization of their status as permanent residents, and to gain access to citizenship; and the *African-American* who are said to be the descendants of the American slaves brought to the U.S. between the Seventeenth and the Nineteenth centuries.

A large number of ethnic groups are found across the world. The forms of diversity are varied and groups claim different sorts of demands. In short, the problems of ethnic diversity are different from one part of the world to the other parts. So, the question of applicability of certain theoretical groupings of ethnic communities becomes a problem. Thus I also tried in the last chapter to see whether the classification, made, especially with the Western Democratic Countries as the base, can be applied in other corners of the world. There, I took the Eastern European countries as example and found that there are points of dissimilarities between the two. This shows that we cannot take for granted the western classification (as done by Kymlicka) as the basis of ethnic classification for other parts too.

Here, in the present chapter I will try to apply the same mode of comparison. The question is 'whether the classification given by Will Kymlicka and other theorists can be applied in the Indian context in general and to Manipur in particular?'

For a systematic *Analysis* of the problem I would like to present first of all the nature of ethnic diversity in Manipur and then try to classify all ethnic groups on the line of the classification done by Kymlicka.

The Nature of Ethnic Diversity in Manipur: -

Talking about ethnic diversity in Manipur, Gangumei Kamei mentions that "Manipur is the land of three major

ethnic communities-the Meeteis who had formed the nation-state by the fifteenth century; the Nagas who are indigenous community divided into several tribes who are given an exogenous identity by the British colonial rulers through a generic name 'Naga' since the beginning of the nineteenth century; and the Kuki-chin who migrated to Manipur in different periods of history and who had been given another exogenic identity called 'Kuki'".¹

These are the three main groups in Manipur; however, it is not exhaustive of the existing diversity in Manipur. There are, in addition to these communities mention by Gangumei Kamei, there are many other ethnic communities in the state and they cannot be subsumed in any of these three groups. Another big problem is that many tribes are categorized as a single community but these groups actually have different demands and cultural practices.

To be precise, there are twenty-nine different tribes listed in the State Schedule Tribes list.² One very interesting point is that this list simply says that Schedule Tribe people will be any Naga tribe, any Kuki tribe and any Lushai tribe. This simply means that distinct tribes are not recognized as having distinct identities. This is the official acceptance of the Naga and the Kuki identity of various tribes. But many of the tribes do not like these nomenclatures and have submitted petitions to the

¹ Gangumei Kamei, 'Ethnicity and Politics in Manipur', *The Sangai Express*, December 2003.

² SC and ST lists (modification) orders 1956, Part X Manipur.

Backward Classes Commission for individual recognition to be given to them as schedule tribes.³ All of these tribes claim to have their own distinct cultures and problems. They want their own ethnic identity to be recognized. Then why are they grouped into Nagas or Kukis? And on what basis have they been grouped under these generic names?

Some claim that the communities within each group do have certain similarities in terms of their cultural practices and on that basis the British colonial masters classified them into these generic groups.⁴ But the fact is that all of them claim to have distinct cultural identities. Many of them have recently asserted their separate ethnic identities and demand the inclusion of their ethnic names in the Schedule Tribes list of Manipur instead of simply being clubbed as 'Nagas' or 'Kukis'. This includes the *Mates*, the *Paomeis*, the *Chongthus*, the *Kharams*, the *Taraos*, the *Inpuiis*, etc.⁵

Thus the nature of ethnic diversity in Manipur is that there are numerous ethnic groups living together in the small territory with unequal recognition. Due to certain historical interventions the ethnic groups have been grouped into generic groups like the Nagas and the Kukis. This is a problem we really need to look into.

³ W. Nabakumar www.manipuronline.com/feature/dec2004/interethnic22-4.km

⁴ Gangumei Kamei, 'Ethnicity and Politics in Manipur', *The Sangai Express*, December 2003.

⁵ W. Nabakumar www.manipuronline.com/feature/dec2004/interethnic22-4.km

Classification of Ethnic Groups of Manipur: -

It will be my endeavour to give a classification of ethno-cultural groups found in Manipur on the basis of what Will Kymlicka has done for Western democratic countries. This classification will be done on the basis of their origin, cultural practices and their demands for preserving distinct cultural identities. This classification is important for it is one way in which we can understand the ethnic diversity that exists in Manipur.

As mentioned earlier Kymlicka has categorized ethnic minorities into five groups:-

- a) The National Minority with demands of maintaining their own self-government institutions,
- b) The immigrants with the demand of a more multicultural approach to integration,
- c) The isolationist ethno-religious groups who voluntarily isolate themselves from the larger society;
- d) The Metics with the demand for citizenship, and
- e) The African Americans.

In the same manner we can classify ethnic communities in Manipur into five (5) major groups viz., the Meeteis, the Nagas, the Kukis, the Pangals and 'the others'.

If we use the Kymlickan classification, it will appear that the Meeteis and the Nagas will fall into the category of the National Minority whereas the Kukis and the Pangals

will be classified as immigrants. And 'the other' group will not fall into any of the categories given by Kymlicka.

The Kymlickan classification has certain limitations. First, he does not clearly define what is 'complete and functioning society', a characteristic of National Minority given by himself. Second, he does not discuss the size of population of a particular community as an eligibility condition for granting the status of being a National Minority. For me, National Minority is a status which carries certain specific claims or demands which need to be fulfilled for a peaceful co-existence. In this sense the size of population should be an important criterion. This is because of the fact that the most common demand of national minorities is the maintenance of their own self-government institutions often operating in their own language and sometimes, even outright secession.

For a clear understanding of the nature of ethnic diversity in Manipur we can have a look at the major ethnic groups of Manipur.

The Nagas:

For three important reasons, it will not be proper to use the term 'Nagas' for every ethnic communities included in this generic term. First, the origin of the term itself is a contested one. We actually do not know what it really means when used for identifying certain communities in

Manipur.⁶ Second, it is said that the term 'Naga' was first used in the context of Manipur by the British colonial rulers as part of their divide and rule policy. Before their arrival to Manipur there was no mention of the term in the history of Manipur. Third and the most important reason is that the constituent groups within the larger group 'Naga' are neither identical in their cultures nor similar in the demands.⁷ A research scholar with the Manipur University even mentions recently that the Nagas expand their ethno-cultural boundary by way of bringing the other non-Naga ethnic groups, either through coercion or cultural level or both, to their ethnic fold.⁸

Coming to the point of ethnic classification, if we are to support the classification done by Kymlicka, most of the ethnic groups within the Nagas will fall in the category of National Minority. But considering the factor of the size of the ethnic groups within the Nagas, one big question arises that whether all these smaller (in terms of population), but indigenous tribes with more or less autonomous social existence within the Manipur Kingdom, be identified as the National Minority?

⁶ It is even said that the ideas of 'Naga' in the western meaning could not be applicable to the tribes of Manipur, Haobam Indrakumar, (2002) 'Basic Dimension of Identity and Integration: A Critical Appraisal on Meetei Perspectives' published by E. Girani for Leisam Laisu Thoukaiko! Research Cell, pp. 19.

⁷ Ibid. Also see Gangumei Kamei (1988), 'Glimpses of Land and People of Ancient Manipur' in Naorem Sanajaoba (ed.) *Past and Present*, vol. I Mital Publication, Delhi, pp. 3-22.

⁸ W. Nabakumar, 'The Inter Ethnic Relationship of the Different Communities of Manipur: A Critical Appraisal', Manipur online, December 2003.

Now let's discuss one example. *Sema* is an ethnic community of Manipur. The total population of the *Sema* is just twenty five (25).⁹ Though small in terms of the size of the population they communicate among themselves in their own language (*Sema* language) and claims to be one of the aborigines of Manipur. The question is whether they be given the right to self government? Like *Sema*, there are tens of smaller communities within the Naga umbrella. The *Aimol*, the *Anal*, the *Chothe*, the *Chiru*, the *Angami*, the *Koireng*, the *Koirao* are some of the groups within the Nagas whose population is well below six thousand (6000).¹⁰ And many of the groups do not occupy a particular location but are scattered in different parts of Manipur. Identifying them as National Minority would obviously mean justifying the demand of self-government.

Thus two important points comes up from these facts. First, since one umbrella group is composed of different ethnic groups we cannot identify them as a single national ethnic minority for granting group specific right. Such move cannot minimize inequality within the group. Secondly, it is very difficult to identify smaller groups whose population is too small as National Minority even if they have some of the important characteristics of being a National Minority. Such identification is likely to lead to

⁹ Government of India, *Census of India*, 2001.

¹⁰ W. Nabakumar, 'The Inter Ethnic Relationship of the Different Communities of Manipur: A Critical Appraisal', Manipur online, December 2003.

continuous and unmanageable fragmentation of the society.

The Kukis:

Like the Nagas, the Kukis are a conglomerate of different ethnic groups often with different languages and cultural practices. But unlike the Nagas they are “immigrants” to Manipur. It is said that they arrived in Manipur in different phases starting seventeenth century.¹¹ However, it will not be just to categorize all the groups in the Kukis as immigrants thanks to the inclusion of original people of Manipur within this generic name “the Kukis”. There are old Kukis and new Kukis classified according to the timing of their arrival in Manipur.¹² As in the case of the Nagas, we cannot claim that the Kukis have a single culture.

The Kukis, however, have a profile very different from those that Kymlicka classifies as immigrant communities. The Kukis were nomadic people roaming around with all their belongings and family. Neither individual immigration for economic purpose nor for political motives involved. Significantly they arrived in Manipur when the question of citizenship was not so important as today. They were not settled through proper immigration policy either. And, of course, their demand is different from the groups generally

¹¹ This is mentioned in many books- Gangumei, Col. J. Shakespeare (1912).

¹² W. Nabakumar, ‘The Inter Ethnic Relationship of the Different Communities of Manipur: A Critical Appraisal’, Manipur online, December 2003.

taken as immigrants. Their effort is not to integrate to the mainstream society but to have some sort of homeland within Manipur state where they can maintain their self-government.

The Meeteis:

The Meeteis have been identified as the core community in Manipur. They are settled throughout the Manipur valley and make up about 60 percent of total population of Manipur.¹³ If we recall Kymlicka's work, the Meeteis can be the perfect example of a National Minority. They formed a complete and functioning society on their historic homeland prior to being incorporated into larger Indian society. They had been a self-governing people operating in their own language, i.e., the Meeteilon or Manipuri. It is said that they had formed a nation-state by the 15th century. The Anglo-Manipuri war of 1891 led to the British conquest of Manipur but Manipur remained a nation-state under the British paramountcy. After independence, Manipur formed its own constitution (the Manipur Constitution Act 1947), and was an autonomous state with complete internal independence.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Gangumei Kamei, (1988) 'Glimpses of Land and People of Ancient Manipur' in Naorem Sanajaoba (ed.) *Manipur: Past and Present*, vol. I Mital Publication, Delhi, pp. 3-22. Also see his article 'Ethnicity and Politics in Manipur', *The Sangai Express*, December 2003.

The Pangals:

The Muslims of Manipur are called 'Pangals' or Meetei-Pangals. It is often claimed that they are different from other Muslim people because they have a different history and a unique process of ethnic evolution. They are naturalized people of Manipur following Islam.¹⁵

If we follow the classification made by Kymlicka they seem to be immigrants. Because, they are not original Manipuris. They arrived here in the 18th century as war prisoners. The Meetei king gave them certain portion of land in Manipur where they started settled lives. However, today they do not speak a language different from the Meeteis. They have adopted the same mother tongue. And the most important demand they made is not separation but certain affirmative actions which ensure them proportional seats in legislative Assembly, educational institutions, jobs, etc.¹⁶

For me, they should not be seen as immigrants rather they should be treated as original citizens of the land. This does not mean that they are to be incorporated into the Meeteis. Rather they should be treated as original and separate community of Manipur. They should be treated as citizens because, in the first case they arrived here not on their own footings but brought by Meetei princes as warriors and slaves. Their case is very similar to that of the Fijian Indians who were brought to Fiji by

¹⁵ Shakil Ahmad, 'Socio-economic Survey of Manipuri Muslim', Manipur online, December 2004.

¹⁶ Ibid.

British colonial masters as labourers. More than that the Meetei-Pangals started their settled lives by marrying Meetei women. In this sense they are not totally outsiders. Nevertheless they should be treated as a separate community. Even though they speak Meeteilon as their mother tongue, their religion and other cultural practices are altogether different from the Meeteis and other communities in Manipur.

The other groups:

I called these groups 'the other groups' because these ethnic groups do not fall into any of the groups mentioned above. They should not be confused with either isolationist group or the Metics as identified by Kymlicka and others. Rather, they are to be seen as complete ethnic groups who remain outside any of the umbrella groups viz. the Nagas or the Kukis. They do not belong to the Meetei community either. They are separate and distinct ethnic groups asserting their own ethnic identities. Many of them are indigenous Manipuri tribal communities. But one problem with them is that they are not included in the State Schedule Tribes list. Among them mention may be made of the *Mates*, the *Paomeis*, the *Chongthus*, the *Kharams*, the *Taraos* and the *Inpuis*.¹⁷ Most of them speak different languages. For example, the *Taraos* use their own dialect

¹⁷ W. Nabakumar, 'The Inter Ethnic Relationship of the Different Communities of Manipur: A Critical Appraisal', Manipur online, December 2003.

known as *Taraotrong* with Roman script.¹⁸ They also pursue different cultural practices.

That is a broad classification of ethnic groups in Manipur. When I started this chapter, I had two broad objectives in mind. First, the objective is to critically examine the classification of ethno-cultural groups along the lines used by Will Kymlicka in Western democratic countries. I have already mentioned that the classification cannot be applied in the Eastern European countries. Here also after discussing the nature of ethnic diversity in Manipur, we come to see that Kymlicka's classificatory framework cannot be applied in this context too.

The second objective of the Chapter is to discuss the grounds and justifiability of various claims of different ethnic groups within Manipur with a view of creating an atmosphere of 'multicultural coexistence'. This objective has its own significance due to the fact that existing or living together with equal rights and respect entails certain set of policies which neither deny individuals their basic human rights nor undermine the acceptable cultural community practices. The remaining pages will be devoted for explanation of this objective.

The case with the Meeteis is that in the larger Indian context they are a minority group. They have been demanding the status of being a National Minority. They claim that they are original settlers of Manipur and Manipur is their motherland. In terms of population they

¹⁸ People of India Vol XXXI Manipur, p. 209, 1996.

are the biggest ethnic group and historically they had been the rulers of Manipur. Fragmentation of Manipuris started with the arrival of Hinduism and British along with Christianity. Thus their important demands are that

A. Hinduism should be replaced with the Meeteism by doing away with the festivals and rituals of Hinduism. This particular demand is justified in the sense that Meeteis had been a distinct religion and a cultural community. The state forcefully converted them into Hinduism.¹⁹ However this rule cannot be applied to those who had willingly been converted in Hinduism on their own individual morality. Since adoption of the Hinduism, the cultural practices of the Meeteis including the script of their language had been replaced by Bengali Hindu culture. Now the popular demand is that the Meetei culture should be recognized in the public sphere.

B. The second important demand of the Meeteis is that the territorial integrity of Manipur should not be disturbed in any case. This demand seems to be based on one specific point namely, that Manipur is a historically unified and independent territory in which the Meeteis ruled with considerable local autonomy. Thus, this territory is part of the Meetei identity. I hope this reason is not enough. The

¹⁹ Haobam Indrakumar, (2002) 'Basic Dimension of Identity and Integration: A Critical Appraisal on Meetei Perspectives' Published by E. Girani for Leisam Laisu Thoukaikol Research Cell, pp. 2-3.

Meeteis should understand that Manipur is land of multiculture and multiethnic. There are many other people who are as indigenous as the Meeteis. So they cannot claim that Manipur is the land of the Meeteis only. But I support the idea of Manipur retaining to territorial integrity from another perspective. That, dividing Manipur into 30/40 pieces (for each ethnic groups) will do more harm than solving the problem. Considering the smallness of its territorial size on the one hand, and the existence of a vast number of ethnic groups within the state, on the other, the division of territory will not be a feasible policy. Instead all communities should learn that living together within the territory with equal respect and concern is the need of the hour.

- C. Some groups claim that Manipur should be totally cut off the mainland India thereby creating an independent country.

On the whole the demands made by the Meeteis are typical of a National Minority. But the fact is that they are living in a territory where many other groups are existing. This should be kept in mind.

Now let's come to the case of the Nagas. The single most significant demand made by them is the integration of all Naga inhabited territories, or the formation of a greater Nagaland, 'the Nagalim'. This demand is mainly

based on the idea that the Nagas are a nation and deserved to have a separate territory of its own. If we look not merely from administrative but from a multicultural theoretical perspective, the demand is not justified. Multiculturalism, simply put, wants survival of each distinct cultural group regardless of its size or population. As I mentioned earlier, the Nagas are a group of people who actually are different from one another in terms of the languages they speak, and their cultures and traditions. Their demand seems to be mainly based on political motive rather than social and cultural necessities.²⁰

There can be two grounds for accepting demands of a separate territory. First, the original territory, from which a new territory is to be formed, should be large enough so that after its separation, the territorial interest of other groups are not disturbed. Secondly, the new state formation should be based on survival of each distinct ethnic identity. Meaning, we cannot do it at the cost of the interest of other ethnic groups. Another question that comes up is, “whether a ‘conglomeration’ (of various different groups) can be given certain group rights in the name of multicultural co-existence?”

A conglomeration of groups is just like a state where different cultural communities exist. If the differences within the conglomeration remain unrecognized, the problems, of a ‘liberal state’ in which a dominant community is placed at an advantaged, will come back

²⁰ Kamei 2003. Research Paper.

again. Thus, it will be very problematic to consider providing certain group rights for a conglomerate. Instead, we need to take into account the differences within such a conglomeration. Thus, the question of preserving and promoting different ethnic groups is more important than merely providing a single group right for 'Nagas' as a group. And there is no guarantee that after having a distinct and separate territory, the Nagas will preserve and promote the distinct ethnic cultures of its constituents. If they claim that they cannot live together with the Meeteis, or the Kukis or the Paites or the Muslims because their interest is different, then the question is 'how can they maintain their internal cultural differences?'

Now let's look into the demands made by the Kukis. As distinct from the Meeteis and the Nagas, they demand formal recognition and the VIth (sixth) Schedule of Indian Constitution, so that even as they remain within Manipur a new district can be carved specially for them. There are counter claims to these demands as some people see them as immigrants. But, I feel this demand is a legitimate one. Through such arrangements, they feel, they can address their problems more effectively. However, like the Nagas, they are not a single ethnic group. So the question, 'how will they maintain internal differences?', still remains unanswered.

The case of the Meetei-Pangals is altogether different from all other groups. Unlike the Nagas or the Kukis, they are a single unified Muslim group settled in the valley

sharing space with the Meeteis. Their most important demand is to be recognized as a minority community within the state. This is a legitimate demand, which needs serious consideration.

If these are the demands made by the specific groups, now let's see what can be done from a multicultural perspective.

What Multiculturalism Requires: The Need of the Hour: -

Developing a multicultural society based on equal respect and concern is not an easy task, yet it is the need of the hour. The claims and counter-claims of various ethnic groups in Manipur not only create disharmony in the state but also show an unequal relationship among the various ethnic groups, which resulted into various ethnic clashes. We need to remember the clashes between the Nagas and the Kukis (1992-1997), which lasted for nearly 5 years and claimed thousands of lives; clashes between the Meeteis and the Pangals (1993); and between the Kukis and the *Paites* (1997-1998). All of these are not due to diversity but inequality with regard to rights, respect and concern. So creating an atmosphere of 'equality' is the need of the hour.

A mere separation or division of the small territory will not produce the desired result because of the internal difference within each umbrella group. The Meeteis should understand that Manipur is a multicultural state. The

beauty of this multiculturalism can be preserved only when each group respects the other with regard to their ways of life, language and cultural practices. No single group or ethnic community controls or possesses Manipur as a whole practically. The fate and destiny of Manipur has to be decided by its constituent communities which the Meeteis have to admit and they have to shed their streak of majoritarian dominating stance.²¹ The Meetei culture and nationhood should be made accommodative of other cultures and ethnic identities. It is said that the destiny of Manipur hinges around four important factors: A) Political outlook of the Meeteis B) Their dealings with the other communities C) Perception of other ethnic communities towards the Meeteis and D) How the outside world perceives them.²²

The same responsibility has to be taken by other cultural communities too. The Nagas should understand that the mere formation of a separate state for them is not the solution. Many of the ethnic groups within the Nagas are opposed to this move. Even the extension of cease-fire agreement between the NSCN (IM) and the Indian Army to Manipur had been opposed by none other than people from *Tangkhul, Kabui, Maring, Chiru, Zeliarong* communities who are constituent parts of the Naga Umbrella.²³ The Meetei Pangals off and on assert that they

²¹ Farooq Ahmad 'Preserving Territorial Integrity of Manipur' *Manipur online* August 2002.

²² Ibid.

²³ Report, *Huyen Lanpao* (Daily) July 28, 2001.

want to see Manipur as it is united territorially within the Indian polity because they read any other move will be catastrophic.²⁴ Neither the Meeteis nor the Kukis will accept it. The interests of all the communities should be respected and recognized and that is the beauty of the Multiculturalism.

In such a condition the most desired solution is to give certain amount of autonomy, not territorial but cultural to each of all the ethnic communities. There should be a socio-political set up in which identity of each ethnic group is recognized and respected. Every single identity should be taken into account instead of recognizing an umbrella group composing different ethnic communities.

Traditionally Manipur had been ruled by the Meetei kings with considerable local autonomy. However, this local autonomy was not uniform in the sense that some local authorities had more power than others. And since, these were not constitutional, many a time the larger or the stronger power ran over the smaller ones. We can have a socio-political set up in that traditional line of local autonomy with constitutional recognition.

There are two options before us, first, the Western model of multination federation. And second, a form of consociational democracy. A multilevel federalism adopts a form of government that grants significant territorial

²⁴ Farooq Ahmad 'Preserving Territorial Integrity of Manipur' *Manipur online* August 2002.

autonomy to several national minorities. This kind of territorial autonomy cannot be considered in the context of Manipur for the various reasons I have mentioned earlier. Of course, certain amount of autonomy should be given to all ethnic communities. However it should not be in the form of territorial autonomy. It should 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 Habsburg Empire.²⁵

Again, we may look at consociational democracy. Arend Lejphart explains how consociational democracy explains the political stability of Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. In his classic study, he 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 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 affair²⁶

This kind of government of a grand coalition of all significant segments with mutual veto powers is possible

²⁵ Explain in 'Constitutionalizing Democracy in Fragmented Societies', Samuel Issacharff, *Journal of International Affairs*, Fall 2004, vol. 58.

²⁶ Ibid.

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 small ethnic groups. Especially the provision of veto powers will not work here. Because, if each of the groups has veto power, it will be very difficult to take decision on any matter. So the best possible option is to have certain kind of arrangements 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 protect its autonomy?

Another significant point we need to discuss here is one of the most important value of multiculturalism, viz. equality among various groups. The mechanism to promote this value (which I mention in my first and second chapters) is missing in both the options of multilevel federalism and consociational democracy. So, we certainly need to evolve or develop a certain mechanism which can promote all the three values of multiculturalism viz. the value of cultural community, the value of equality among all the cultural communities and the value of individual rights.

Conclusion

Designing Institutions for Multicultural Manipur

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a multicultural policy should promote three important values viz. value of cultural communities; value of individual democratic rights; and value of equality. We have already understood the importance of being a member of a particular cultural community. All human beings are culturally embedded in the sense that they grow up and live within a culturally structured world and organize their lives and social relations in terms of a culturally derived system of meaning and significance. Thus, the value of cultural community is one which multiculturalism needs to recognize and even promote. But promoting only the value of community membership is not enough. There are conflicts that arise due to the desire of the larger communities to expand and dominate over the smaller ones. So, along with acknowledging the value of community we need to find a mechanism to promote equality among various cultural communities so that the ultimate goal of peaceful co-existence is achieved. Again, if we promote only these two values, one more value will be missing: namely, individual liberty. There are times when individual rights and liberty are undermined in the name of community values. Individuals need their own space for the development of their own personality. Thus, the final position is that all the three values are to be promoted side by side.

I have already mentioned that the two options namely (a) multilevel federalism, and (b) consociational democracy have certain limitations and it will not be possible for us to get the desired result through these options. Under these circumstances we need to rethink and develop new kinds of governance, which can promote a true multicultural socio-political system.

This new system may have a pyramidically structured three-tier governance. The power of the state will be divided among these different levels of government. At the bottom of the structure there will be 'ethnic governments' of different ethnic communities. These ethnic governments will have considerable cultural autonomy in their internal affairs. However, these governments are not to be formed on regional basis by which a regional government is constructed with territorial autonomy. As mentioned earlier, the mode of territorial autonomy (or territorial separation) will be suicidal in an already fractured society like Manipur. If we want to promote territorial integrity as well as peaceful co-existence, we should not go for any kind of territorial division. We need to remember that most of the communities in Manipur are indigenous communities and if territorial autonomy is granted to each group, at last the whole territory will be divided into various pieces. And there are not just five or six groups but more than thirty different groups. The members of some of the groups are not confined to a fixed place but are scattered to different places. I have already mentioned that all the cultural groups need to be recognized instead of just identifying as Nagas, Kukis, etc. So territorial division within Manipur remains infeasible. Manipur, the territory, should

remain as a common property of all the groups or the members of the groups existing in Manipur.

Regarding the membership of these governments, all the members of a community can be members of that particular ethnic government no matter where he or she lives. They can take part in the maintenance of internal affairs of their ethnic government. The Meeteis will not be members (or citizens for this matter) of Imphal where they live. Pangals will not be members of Lilong where majority is Pangals. But the Meeteis will be members of the Meetei community and the citizens of that ethnic government. Paites will be members of their ethnic governments but not members of the local where they are. Meaning, territory is nothing to do with this membership or citizenship. But when we talk of Manipur as a whole, all eligible adults, like in other normal states, will be citizens of Manipur. Thus we have two kinds of citizenship or membership within Manipur: citizenship of Manipur which has territorial significance, and citizenship or membership of each ethnic government which has no territorial significance as such. In short, these governments will be in the form of cultural autonomy, which enables these groups 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. This kind of non-territorial autonomy is possible.

About the nature of the governance of each ethnic government, it is to be decided according to the need of each ethnic community. If an ethnic group has its own system of

village or ethnic administration and if it does not have any negative aspect regarding individual liberty and relationship with other communities, we should let them continue with it. For instance, *Aimols* have their own village administrative system. Here all members of the village hold the right to participate in the village administration. The chief of the village is known as *Kamsaki*. His ministers are known as *Pasha-kariat*. Chieftainship is attained by promotion. After the death of the chief, the senior most ministers can become the chief. After the *Pasha-kariat* group comes the *Maitrempi* group. The chief can take help of the *Maitrempi* in settling disputes.¹

At the middle level of the three-tier system, there will be a level, which we can call 'government with community representatives'. Representatives from each ethnic community will form this government. All the communities will send certain number of representatives on the basis of proportionate representations. Representatives should be from each single ethnic community, not from generic groups like the Nagas, the Kukis, and the likes.

The purpose or objective of this government is the maintenance or the promotion of the value of equality i.e., equality among different community groups. There are moments when conflicts arise due to various sorts of encroachment. The Paites fought against their own Kuki tribes for the same reason. This government can maintain harmony by recognizing each distinct cultural value and incorporating their views in taking any important decision. But there should not be any veto

¹ S. K. Mukherjee, (1998) *People of India: Manipur; Aimol*.

system. Decisions will be taken by consensus or absolute system. The veto system can be a destructive option since it can delay or perhaps hamper decision-making process especially when there are numerous groups with veto power.

There will be another level of government at the top of the pyramid. This is the state government for the whole state. The single most important function of the state government is to safeguard the rights and liberty of individual citizens. It will have the responsibility of policing, communication, interstate trade and commerce and other important concerns for the state as a whole.

In financial matters too, the power will be divided among these three levels of government. The ethnic governments may charge some taxes in order to run their internal affairs. But they can not impose taxes on any matter related to land, territory, even road, agricultural lands, etc. because the power is limited to the promotion of their ethnic community value without territorial concern. The taxes on land, communication, road, etc. will be charged upon by the state.

In fact, what multiculturalism wants is a society in which all the diverse communities live together with equal dignity and concern. It envisages a society, which offers equal opportunities, an environment of peaceful co-existence of various groups within same territory. For this purpose we need to recognize every single cultural community of all size distinctly thereby giving due consideration to each group. The development of such environment of peaceful co-existence is not possible in an 'unequal' society. We need to understand that in modern

democratic countries politics of state is usually identified with majority culture, while the communities that differ from it are designated as minorities. In such multiethnic or multinational societies, minority cultures or communities are disadvantaged in the public arena. They are disadvantaged through the cultural orientation and practices of the nation-state. Multiculturalism, thus, locates cultural identity as a source of discrimination in the society.

Hence, the state should respect the diverse cultures. And respect of diversity implies equal space and opportunity for all cultural communities to sustain themselves. 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 right for vulnerable minorities who have been the victims of force assimilation or exclusion. This will create a more integrated society. As minority receives institutional recognition and their cultures survive and flourish, they will develop a sense of belonging and commitment to the state. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the application of the institutional arrangements already adopted in western socio-political context cannot be feasible here. This is because of the fact that there are contextual differences. In this sense this new system of governance can be a possible option in the context of Manipur and other similar cases.

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