



A Hundred Years After Komagatamaru: Multiculturalism in Australia, Canada and India

THE FEARLESS NADIA OCCASIONAL PAPERS ON INDIA-AUSTRALIA RELATIONS

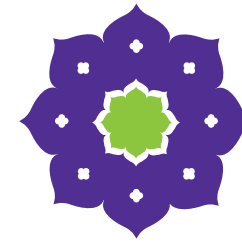
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The Fearless Nadia Occasional Papers on
India-Australia Relations

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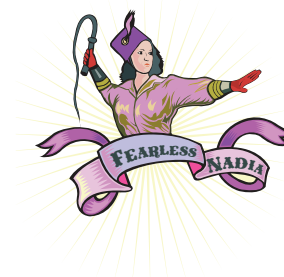
The Australia India Institute expresses its deep gratitude to Wadia Movietone for this gesture and wishes to record the contribution of JBH Wadia who thought up the Hunterwali character, gave Mary Evans her screen name, and popularized the Fearless Nadia persona through his films.

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A Hundred Years After Komagatamaru¹: Multiculturalism in Australia, Canada and India

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Abstract

This paper compares multiculturalism in three democratic countries with diverse ethno-cultural populations: Australia, Canada and India. Although disparate in population size and levels of development, they nevertheless have many common characteristics. Australia and Canada are relatively new immigrant societies that began as British settler colonies, although the Aboriginal populations in both countries have long histories. India, now an independent republic, has an ancient civilisation and owes its diversity to outside influences preceding colonisation by the British. These apparently marked differences, however, do not override the many common contemporary challenges they share in managing diversity.

Multiculturalism is considered here from the point of view of ethnicity, culture, and caste (in the case of India). The influx of people of non-European origin into Canada and Australia is rather recent because both countries previously had racist immigration policies. Since then, a variety of economic, demographic and strategic factors have made immigration from non-European countries, especially India and China, important. While non-white immigrants to Australia and Canada have been subjected to racism and discrimination, in India caste has been a major marker of societal discrimination. All three democracies have, however, attempted to 'manage' diversity and provide equal opportunity to vulnerable and marginalised groups.

Both Canada and Australia have multicultural policies. The Indian constitution is a multicultural document, although the word multiculturalism is not used. In Australia, multicultural policies are codified in statements and documents, while India and Canada have legislated and enshrined their policies in their constitutions.

Multiculturalism is a paradigm shift from assimilation and non-recognition of minority groups to a diffusion of cultures in which there is no dominant culture. It implies a major shift in power relations. While data from Canada and India indicate that the status quo is slowly shifting through political and economic integration, social attitudes are slow to change and discrimination prevails. In Australian society debate continues about whether to maintain the dominance of British culture or a move towards a fusion of cultures.

The effectiveness of policies is dependent on both political will and social attitudes. In all three countries neo-liberal governments are focused on individualism and the market economy, which has resulted in the commodification of diversity, thus diverting attention from equity and social justice issues.

¹A In May 1814, the Komagatamaru, a ship with 376 Indians docked on Vancouver harbour having completed the Canadian immigration requirement of arriving after a "continuous journey" without stopping. The passengers were prevented from disembarking, the ship was forced to turn back after many passengers died, and the Indians were not allowed to immigrate. Ironically, India is now the largest source of immigrants to Canada. In 2014, the government of Canada issued a stamp marking 100 years of this unfortunate historical event although a formal apology has never been given by the Canadian parliament.

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Introduction

Multiculturalism means different things to different people. It is a hotly debated and controversial concept. It is said to have emerged in 1941 as a response to a form of nationalism that implied a nation's superiority over others: by contrast, to favour *multiculturalism* meant to respect all nations and peoples.³ However, its more recent meaning can be derived from Canada's national Policy of Multiculturalism (1971), an attempt to form an inclusive society by maintaining democratic principles of justice and equality in an increasingly diverse society. Since then, the concept has evolved beyond ethnicity, race⁴ and religion to include lifestyle and other markers of difference. Now, although widely used globally as a means of managing diversity, a lack of conceptual understanding of the term has led to many interpretations resulting in many "multiculturalisms". Regardless of the range of interpretations, multiculturalism in any guise upsets the status quo in previously homogenous societies, and the concept has become very controversial in Western countries that have diverse immigrant populations.

This paper begins with a brief discussion of the main concepts of multiculturalism. The word "multicultural" means multiple and different cultures and its original focus was on diversity based ethnic cultures. Given that human beings are "diversely different" because of the intersecting pluralities of human identity (Sen, 2006, xiv), we need to focus on some salient aspects of difference. Thus, in this short paper I discuss multiculturalism from the point of view of ethnicity, culture, and caste (in India). These are significant markers of difference in Australia, Canada and India alike. Following that, I discuss some characteristics of the multicultural populations in these three countries and the nature of diversity in the complex interplay between diversity and equality in democracies. I look at policy development related to ethno-cultural diversity: Multiculturalism (Australia, Canada) and Reservations (India). Notwithstanding the complexities of cross-cultural comparisons, this study extends understanding of different approaches to the inclusion of minority populations. What seems normal in one context may stand out in a comparative framework. I conclude with brief assessments of the current state of multicultural policies in each context.

Concepts:

Multiculturalism

To say that a society is multicultural is to recognise the diversity of that society—but what makes it diverse may be differing ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, religions, sexes, ages, class, and so on. A variety of differences become the basis for inequality in each society. An inequality based on differences is discrimination. Gender inequality is perhaps the most significant basis for discrimination because it not only crosscuts many other categories but its effects are multiple, additive and wide ranging. And although gender violence and bias are major problems, recently attracting much attention in India, I focus here on discrimination based on ethnicity, culture, and caste in order to contain the paper. In doing so I do not attribute to these categories the position of being the primary or only cause for discrimination, which would essentialise as well as oversimplify them—given that class, gender, religion and language for example, cut across ethnicity, culture and caste, and are themselves significant markers for discrimination and disadvantage.

Most members of minority groups (along with Leftist academics) who are concerned with access to education and employment emphasise the equality of opportunity aspect of multiculturalism and are critical of interpretations of the policy that focus on essentialising cultural and ethnic identity. Not only does emphasis on the maintenance of various cultures pose the danger of viewing

³ The concept was mentioned in a book review in the *New York Herald-Tribune* for July 1941. *Multiculturalism* (1965) meant "respect for the ways of all nations and peoples, not just ones own life." <http://www.answers.com/topic/multicultural>

⁴ The controversial word "race" has no basis in evolutionary biology, but as a social category its interpretation and implications are significant. Racism continues to be an important defining factor.



cultures in a static way (the museum approach) but also, in contemporary societies, ethnicity and culture have become the code words for “race”. The wave of anti-immigrant sentiment that started in the 1970s known as the “new racism” involves ethnicity and culture in a manner similar to racial difference but substitutes racist rhetoric with apparently neutral terms such as “ethnic” or “cultural difference”. Thus discrimination based on ethnicity and culture is disguised in “culturalist” terms as “ethnic difference” without using overtly racist terminology (May, 1999; Brah, 1992). Similarly, religion has now become one of the most controversial domains in multiculturalism (Kymlicka, 2010) – particularly as it relates to Islamophobia, especially in Europe. Although casteism is discrimination based on a rigid social distinction it is not thought of as racism in public discourse in India, but it is a distinct form of racialisation because it is based on a racialised structure of society.⁵

The concepts of ethnicity and culture also need to be problematised and cannot be seen in a homogenous and static way. Not only do members of ethnic groups have different experiences due to class, religion, language and other differences, but also ethnic identities are constantly changing, so always in the making. Similarly, culture is a dynamic concept and cannot be seen as static. Cultures are evolving and mixing and becoming so different that new generations often cannot identify with previous generations. The very concept of cultural identity is being reshaped with postmodern theorising on hybridity and new ethnicities. And although caste is a hereditary category, caste identities are also changing with education, changes in political and economic power and even the mixing of castes. While identity is certainly about “who we are, where we are coming from” (Taylor, 1994:33-34), culture and ethnicity become diffused when we come from a variety of backgrounds. Moreover, since identities are constantly in a state of flux and also influenced by *where we are, how people identify us and where we are going* we cannot think of identities without considering our situatedness, the current contexts and individual agency. One response to multiculturalism by neo-liberalists is blindness to differences in skin colour (racial and ethnic differences) (Ghosh, 2011). But human beings are different and their location gives them differential power. To ignore that difference is “misrecognition” and this may be unjust and inegalitarian (Taylor, 1994; Sen, 1992). The salient point in the policy of multiculturalism is *equal opportunity despite cultural and ethnic differences*. This implies both a lack of discrimination and the recognition and validity of cultural identities, which are always in the making.

I take multiculturalism to imply the right to difference so that all individuals and groups have equal rights by law and equal opportunity to exercise those rights in a society that is not only inclusive but is formed from a fusion of cultures.⁶ How can contemporary multicultural democracies devise effective, equitable policies to deal with diversity and build “just” societies? Can there be equality when there is diversity? A “multicultural society” refers to diversity in society. However, the concept of multiculturalism usually refers to an ideology or policy that deals with diversity in society ostensibly to create a “just society,” a totally new “third space” in which we and the other come together but also maintain social cohesion and pre-empt social unrest (management of diversity). As a policy it is an attempt by the state to reconcile the reality of social diversity in the population with justice for all. This ideology represents a paradigm shift because it involves a radically new way of thinking from assimilation or homogeneity at one end of the spectrum, to heterogeneity and a fusion of many cultures at the other end. Multicultural policy is nevertheless a state initiative and imposed from the top. As such it cannot change social attitudes. However, as Martin Luther King Junior pointed out, legislation cannot change hearts but can restrain the heartless. By giving equal status to all cultures and groups it is a major shift in political ideology where power traditionally rests with the dominant group. It implies a change in power relations that would address the inequalities in society, which result in vastly different life chances for people. In social institutions such as education, multiculturalism implies a paradigm shift from the traditional policy of assimilation into the majority culture (for Immigrants), or separation from it (as in caste). Education can be a powerful tool for combating inequity and creating a peaceful tolerant society in today’s conflict-ridden world (Ghosh, 2011).

⁵A bill to consider caste discrimination as racism is currently under consideration in the UK parliament.

⁶I want to distinguish “fusion” from inclusion as being a matter of accommodating the other into a dominant culture. Following Gadamer (1989) and Bhabha (1994) I see a truly multicultural society as a “Third Space” that comprises a location, a space in which there is a fusion of the first space invaded by one’s ethno-cultural identity, and the second space that is the culture of the other, to form a dynamic new hybrid third culture while maintaining both the first and second spaces. It involves multiple identities.



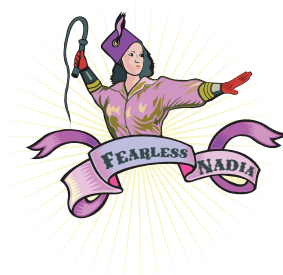
In Australia and Canada, multicultural policies were inserted into mono-cultural white Anglo-Celtic or Anglo-Saxon social institutional structures that marginalised minority groups. Majority cultures tend to see multicultural policy as a policy for “ethnic” cultural groups, not only denying themselves ethnicity and culture but also removing themselves from being part of the societal change that was needed to create a “fusion of horizons” (Gadamer, 1989), a composite culture or “third space” (Bhabha, 1994). Dominant groups in the Canadian and Indian manifestations of multiculturalism and social inclusion have been less concerned with efforts to change their own attitudes towards minority groups while attempting to be inclusive, whereas in Australia the dominant group has asserted its ‘British’ culture while appeasing minority ethnic groups by providing services. As a matter of fact, members of majority cultures are often unaware of the power imbalance in their favour and of their many privileges not shared by minority cultural groups. Hierarchical structures continue to a great extent to reproduce the existing patterns of inequality and maintain the status quo.

Inequality has been at the centre of political debate over the last few decades with respect to both individual and group differences in relation to dominant groups, especially in terms of race, class, gender and sexual orientation. Globalisation has unleashed significant growth in global wealth in recent years, but a significant increase in inequality as well (Picketty, 2014). The concurrent movement of people and business between and across countries has led to large-scale immigration, refugee resettlement and travel, which in turn have made societies very diverse. People everywhere are confronted with different cultures, languages, religions, cuisines and modes of dress. The movement of people across borders also means the intermixing of cultures that shift static notions of single national cultures towards fluid, changing and even shifting and hybrid (mixed) or multiple identities. The new politics of cultural difference focuses on cultural and political identity as central to the meaning of democratic representation, and on transforming the monolithic and the homogenous into new forms of diversity, multiplicity and heterogeneity. Cultures are blending and the concept of multiculturalism is no longer one of homogenous cultures coming together. Rather, people have multiple identities and can have local, national and global allegiances simultaneously. This implies that the concept of multiculturalism does not theoretically prevent the development of a national identity.

While globalisation has led to homogenisation of cultures on the one hand through technology, communication and travel, there is on the other hand a rise in identity politics in which minority ethno-cultural groups articulate their felt oppression by asserting their cultural characteristics (essentialism notwithstanding) in an attempt to counter the homogenising effects of Western culture at the global level and the hegemony of mainstream culture within countries. This rise in ‘minority nationalism’, has led to multiculturalism accommodating competing identities⁷. The discourse on public policy and diversity emphasises and justifies neo-liberal ideals of competition for global markets, efficiency and consumerism, and the commodification of diversity. While neo-liberal doctrine promotes freedom – open borders, free competition - it is an ideology of individualism focusing on personal money and power at the expense of group welfare (Eriksen, 2006). In this context, diversity has marketable value, it is economically profitable, but the focus has moved away from social justice issues. Cuts to public sector initiatives have diluted public policy commitments to equality and social justice concerns.

One of the problems with multicultural policy is its lack of a historical perspective (Rizvi, 2014) because it does not include the rights of Aboriginal people to their historical claims to land and other natural resources. In both Canada and Australia, Aboriginal peoples have rejected multicultural policies as they reduce their unique, historic experiences of colonisation to issues of inequality and racism that overlap with experiences of other minorities. According to 2006 figures the proportion of the total population in Canada that is Aboriginal is 3.9% and in Australia 2.5%. In India, the Aboriginal peoples are called *Adivasis*, but since the British called them “Tribes” and listed them

⁷Although outside the purview of this paper, in the case of nationalist projects that demand territorial autonomy for nationalist groups “multination federalism” has been a successful model of stability (Kymlicka, 2011) as seen in Canada (Quebec) and India (where most states are based on ethnicity and language).



in a schedule they have been referred to as Scheduled Tribes (ST)⁸. They comprise 8.6% of the total population of India (Census 2011). Several Indian states are based on tribal claims to land. Because *Adivasis* are historically amongst the most disadvantaged groups in Indian society they are given Reservation (quota-based affirmative action) in the Indian Constitution of 1950 to ensure equal opportunity in education and employment. No such action has been taken either by the Australian or Canadian governments for their Aboriginal populations, although a few educational institutions have their own affirmative education policies for Aboriginal candidates for access to some professional tertiary institutions (e.g. McGill University medical school).

Diversity and Difference

Is there a difference between cultural diversity and cultural difference? Drawing a distinction between the two concepts Homi Bhabha (2006) sees cultural diversity as a static concept, an object of knowledge that expresses the separation of totalised cultures but sees cultural difference as dynamic. Cultural difference is what identifies the separateness of cultures. It is a process of differentiation that happens at the boundaries of cultures, at the point where cultures meet, where differences become most apparent and misunderstandings arise.

What is diversity? In public discourse, diversity implies heterogeneity, contrariety of qualities, dissimilarity and difference. Diversity is derived from the social construction of meanings about differences among people. But difference is a comparative term, so the real question is: "different from whom"? More importantly, we may ask: "different in what way" (Ghosh, 2002)? "Difference" is relational and it is created. Diversity is defined by difference from the norm, which is usually the majority culture. The meanings given to these differences are socially constructed and are based on certain characteristics or markers such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, class, sexual orientation and so on. But the idea of difference as such hides its profoundly political aspect that results in prejudice (the attitude) and discrimination (the behaviour) (Ghosh & Abdi, 2013). It is not the differences in themselves but the social construction and *conceptualisation* of these differences that divide people (Lorde, 1984). Through the construction of specific meanings, markers of difference take on importance according to time and place so that the target of discrimination at one point in time and in a particular society may not be the same at another point in time and in another society.

In India, diversity has tended to focus on caste and class, as well as religion and language differences. In the Canadian and Australian context, diversity focuses on differences in race, ethnicity and culture. Since 9/11, religious differences, especially Islamophobia, have become increasingly important as a marker of diversity related to racial characterization, especially in Canada and its neighbour the United States. In each case the difference is viewed from the perspective of hegemony, and the powerful construct the "other".

Comparison of three countries: Australia, Canada and India

Disparate though they may seem, Australia, Canada and India have several things in common. Despite the differences in population size, traditions, histories, and social and political philosophies, these multicultural societies share some common experiences. All three countries have policies that aim to integrate potentially disadvantaged minority populations. In Australia and Canada, the multicultural policies at the national government level are supplemented at the state or provincial government levels, especially in those areas where the state has exclusive jurisdiction, as in education in Canada. All three countries were colonised by Britain and all three are members of

⁸This is akin to the Aboriginal peoples in Canada who are classified as "Status Indians" and registered on the Indian Register under the Indian Act of 1867.



the Commonwealth. What are known as Australia and Canada today began with British settlers and reflect British culture (with the exception of the province of Québec in Canada). Due to the British influence all three countries have the English language in common, and this has been an asset to India, particularly in a globalised economy. All three countries are secular democratic federations of states or provinces each having its own constitution. India became independent of colonial rule in 1947 and its Constitution came into force in 1950. The Commonwealth of Australia Act of 1901 was enacted in the British Parliament but in 1986 the British Parliament's power was removed. Similarly, in Canada, the British North America Act of 1867 was repatriated in 1982 from the British Parliament (the province of Québec has not signed the 1982 Canadian Constitution). Australia and Canada continue to have the Queen of England as their monarch. All three countries had dominion status until India became a Republic in 1950 and shed its dominion status.

With a civilisation dating back to 3300 BCE, India's diversity stems from the many outside influences of conquerors and traders, many of whom settled permanently in India prior to British colonisation. Australia and Canada, on the other hand, are comparatively recent settlements, although indigenous people inhabited both countries for thousands of years before European invasion began in Canada with the French (1608) and the British (colonies along the Atlantic in the early 1600s), and in Australia around 1788. All three countries have disadvantaged Aboriginal populations. The early histories of Canada and Australia involved the violent conquest of indigenous lands by early colonialists from France and Britain and European-introduced diseases that decimated Aboriginal populations. The introduction of Christianity to Aboriginal populations is common to all three countries, but Canada and Australia also have the common and shameful history of forced residential schools for Aboriginal children.

All three countries have diverse, multicultural populations although the disparity in their relative sizes is enormous. The diversity in India is made more complex by regional disparities, the caste system and a rigid hierarchical social class structure. The Canadian situation is also complicated due to the concept of two founding nations (English and French - the Aboriginal people are left out of this equation). A nationalist movement of the French-speaking Québécois has rejected both federal government policies of bilingualism and multiculturalism. All three countries have government policies that aim to be inclusive of immigrants (Australia, Canada) and lower castes (India), but in Australia and Canada the Aboriginal populations have rejected these policies.

Other than their Aboriginal people, all Australians and Canadians are immigrants. The immigration policies of both countries are similar: they began as exclusionary and racist policies intended to keep the countries "white". Australia and Canada were both white settler colonies but unlike Australia, Canadian Immigration Acts beginning in 1869 were aimed at keeping out criminals, people seen to be security threats, and those with "diseases". Between 1902 and 1913, nearly 7,000 people were deported on charges of criminality (Canada in the Making, n.d.). Prior to the Citizenship Acts in both countries (Canada 1947 and Australia 1949) their populations were British subjects. At the beginning of the 20th century both countries had large immigration movements. In Canada immigrants came from Britain, Europe and the United States, whereas in Australia they came almost exclusively from Britain. Both countries kept non-white immigrants out and in particular discriminated against Chinese and Indian immigrants, although the latter, like Australians and Canadians, were then subjects of the British Empire. After World War Two, a large number of displaced Europeans migrated to both countries, and it was difficult to defend the racist policies against new notions of race and racism and greater awareness of human rights. The racist immigration policies were abandoned by Canada in 1967, while the overtly racist White Australia Policy was gradually dismantled before being abolished in 1973. Instead, a "points system" was introduced by both countries in response to an increasing need for population growth, skilled labour and strategic geographical and trade interests. Although all three countries have taken in a large number of people as refugees when they are deemed refugees and who become residents of that country, Australia has a controversial policy - the "Pacific Solution". This policy deals with asylum seekers by transporting them to islands in the Pacific Ocean for the assessment of their



refugee claims, preventing them from landing on Australian soil. In Canada, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act of 2001 was passed after 9/11 and tightened the restrictions on both immigrants and refugees entering Canada, and gave broad powers to immigration officials to arrest, detain and deport people on mere suspicion of terrorist links. India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, but it gives asylum to refugees from neighbouring countries, notably Afghanistan and Myanmar although there has been much resistance by local residents to allowing Bangladeshi refugees spilling into the state of Assam.

Australia and Canada are now both recipients of immigrants from India. And finally, Australia and India have in common a passion for cricket!

The Nature of Diversity in Australia, Canada and India

Australia

According to the 2011 Census (Bureau of Statistics, 2011), 21.5 million people live in Australia, somewhat geographically isolated and in the southern hemisphere. The popular perception that Anglo-based immigration is over is untrue, and the UK continues to be by far the largest source of immigrants (1.1 million) compared to the second (New Zealand 484,000), third (China 319,000) and fourth (India 295,000) countries. Today, immigration from China and India is rapidly growing.

The Commonwealth of Australia is comprised of the mainland of the Australian continent, the island of Tasmania, and numerous smaller islands. It is the world's sixth largest country in total land area. Like Canada, it is a federal parliamentary democracy and a constitutional monarchy. According to the 2011 Census, two thirds of the population identified as Christians, 22% as having no religion, while Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs each make up 2.5% or less. Australia has no official language but English is the *lingua franca*, and some immigrant groups continue to speak other languages. Around 70 Aboriginal languages, many of which are endangered, are now recognised, although it is estimated that there were about 400 Aboriginal languages at the time of European first contact.

Canada

Multiculturalism defines to a large extent a unique national consciousness and identity for Canadians. Presently, Canada's 35 million people comprise 200 linguistic groups (Statistics Canada, 2011)⁹. Around 57% have English as a mother tongue as compared to 23% whose mother tongue is French, and these two groups are still the largest ethno-cultural groups. Over 19% of the total population in Canada is classified as visible minorities¹⁰. The top three visible minority groups in Canada as a whole are South Asians¹¹, Chinese and Black although in different regions this may vary. Between 2006 and 2011, 78% of all immigrants were visible minorities, mainly from Asia. With eight million people, the French-speaking province of Québec has a little less than a quarter of the total population of Canada. In the 2011 Census a large number of people identified as having multiple ethnic origins and speak more than one language.

The 10 provinces and three territories of Canada together form the world's second largest country in area. A parliamentary democracy and a constitutional monarchy, Canada has been described

⁹The figures given for the 2011 Census in the following paragraphs are taken from various documents of Statistics Canada

¹⁰The federal government refers to people from Asia, Africa and Latin America as "people of color" or "visible minorities" and the latter term is defined in the federal *Employment Equity Act* to mean persons other than aboriginal peoples who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour. The term "visible minority" itself may be discriminatory according to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which says distinction based on race, color, descent or national or ethnic origin is discriminatory and calls on Canada to reflect on the use of this term (CBC News, 2007). The province of Quebec refers to these groups as "cultural communities".

¹¹Indian sub-continent



as operating under "multination federalism" (Kymlicka, 2011) because of its territorial autonomy for First Nations and official recognition of Québec as a nation¹². The country is bilingual and multicultural. While eight provinces have English as their official language, Québec has French as its official language and New Brunswick is bilingual (English and French). In the 2011 Census, two-thirds of the population identified with a Christian religion of which Roman Catholics (largely in Québec) formed the largest group. Among the non-Christian religious groups, Muslims formed the largest group at 3.2%, with Hindus, Sikhs, Jews and Buddhists each comprising less than 2% of the population.

India

India is perhaps the most diverse country in the world in terms of culture, ethnicity, language, religion, caste and class differences, but the term "multicultural" is not used in India with reference to policy, and it is only since the 1990s that the concept has been taken up by scholars.

According to the 2011 Census, India's population is over 1.21 billion people. About 80% of the population is Hindu (of several varieties) and the Muslim population is estimated to be 14.6% of the total (the 2011 data on religions has not been released yet), with other minority religious groups (Christians, Sikhs, Buddhist, Jains, Animist and others) ranging from 2.4 to 0.41 percent of the total population (Census 2001). The Scheduled Caste (SC) population stood at 16.6% in 2011, and when combined with the Scheduled Tribes (8.6%), comprise a quarter of the Indian population. Although this population is spread across the states, Punjab has the highest SC population.

India does not have a national language but Hindi (Devanagiri script) and English are the official languages of the Union (or Central) Government, 22 languages have been given "official regional language" status, and the country is home to hundreds of languages and dialects. India is a federal union of 29 states, and seven Union Territories (which are directly ruled by the Union Government) based on ethno-linguistic or ethno-religious groups. Each of these states and Union territories has linguistic, multicultural and multireligious minorities.

Multiculturalism and Policy development

Australia

The colonisation of Australia by Britain began in 1788 when the first convicts were transported as labour to establish a new colony (Sood, 2012), and so prevent France and Spain from usurping Britain's claim to the territory. The first free settlers arrived in 1793 and most early arrivals were British and Irish. Soon after Federation in 1901 the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*¹³ was passed and formed the basis of the White Australia Policy. It comprised several policies to prioritise immigration from certain European countries, some of whose emigrants were given travel assistance. For a long time, Australians were largely descendants of Europeans and favoured British culture. Since the mid-1970s, with the introduction of the Points System which based the selection of immigrants on personal, social and occupational criteria rather than on racial/ethnic characteristics, immigration has changed dramatically. In 1981 around 2.7 percent immigrants were from Asia, but by 1998 about 40 percent of all immigrants to Australia had been born in Asia. The largest non-white groups by country of origin have been Chinese and Indian immigrants, and between 2006 and 2011 the immigration of people of Indian origin increased more than any other group, rising by more than 14 per cent (Pecotich and Shultz, 2006; Cohen, 2003; Wikipedia, Australia, XXX).

In the 1970s, Federal Immigration Minister Al Grassby, who was hostile towards the concept of a superior British charter group (Hawkins, 1989), and Prime Minister Gough Whitlam of the Labour

¹²Motion adopted in the House of Commons, 27 November 2006, [House of Commons Debates](#), 2006.

¹³It included a dictation test in any European language (at the discretion of the immigration officer) the purpose of which was not to assess the language skills of a person but to be given to persons selectively on the basis of race to exclude that person without explicitly saying so. The test was abolished only in 1958.



Party ended the White Australia Policy and laid the foundations for multiculturalism policy which dropped all references to race. In 1975 the *Racial Discrimination Act* made discrimination based on race illegal. However, it was the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council appointed by the Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser that defined multiculturalism in its 1977 report *Australia as a Multicultural Society*.

The Galbally *Review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services for Migrants* of 1978 influenced the development of multiculturalism in Australia: the focus was on equal opportunity and access, maintenance and understanding of cultures; the need for special services in addition to existing community services, and work towards self-reliance for newly arrived immigrants. It stressed the need for education and language development and strengthening ethnic media. The policy framework has evolved with successive reports over the years, most recently in 2003 with the release of the government's policy statement *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity*. While multiculturalism has been enacted in Canadian law, in Australia the legal basis for multiculturalism came via the *Australian Institute for Multiculturalism Affairs Act, 1979* (Australian Government, 1979). However, the Institute was abolished and the Act repealed in 1987. Multiculturalism as a policy had become so controversial by 1990 that bipartisan support for further attempts at legislation was unlikely to be forthcoming. Language teaching continued to decline in schools and universities, and government subsidies to support the teaching of Asian languages were withdrawn. Attempts to develop national multicultural education programs failed (Jupp, 1999).

Canada

The French colonies always had low immigration and the French-speaking population was concentrated in what is now Eastern Canada. Sixty percent of settlers who came to Canada during Britain's Industrial Revolution were British. Thus, by the end of the Great Migration in the mid-19th century the British population was more than double that of the French population. This had a profound impact on Canadian culture. Unlike France, the British government was very involved in colonial emigration legislation. A program of settlements in western Canada by British and other continental Europeans was encouraged after completion of the trans-Canada railway in 1885 (built mainly by Chinese labourers), uniting people from coast to coast. Many other immigrant groups from around the globe helped to build the country. But immigration policies were racist, and both early Chinese and Indian immigrants faced severe restrictions. *The Chinese Immigration Act 1885* put a 'head tax' on Chinese immigrants and the *Continuous Journey Act 1908*¹⁴ prevented Indians from immigrating to Canada. The Immigration Acts were changed several times till in 1967 the Points System was introduced. Similar to the Australian policy but preceding it, the Immigration Act of 1967 ended racial criteria for the selection of immigrants and focused on personal, social and occupational characteristics. This enabled people from all continents to emigrate, making the country very diverse. Currently, most immigrants come from South Asia and China.

In discussing Canada I do not include the special case of Québec in order to keep within the space limits, although it provides a very interesting case of nested contexts in terms of culture and ethnicity. Canada's policies on bilingualism and multiculturalism were a response to the Québécois demand for separation as well as the demands of European immigrant groups such as Ukrainians for cultural recognition. However, bilingualism did not satisfy Québec's need to link language to territory and multiculturalism was a threat to francisation, or assertion of the dominance of French language, culture and identity of the province. The policy of multiculturalism announced in 1971 by Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau was vaguely defined, but was nevertheless embodied in the Canadian Constitution in 1992. Although a federal government policy, several provinces have officially adopted multiculturalism. It was not until the *Employment Equity Act 1986*, the *Multiculturalism Act 1988* (passed 17 years after Trudeau's multicultural policy), and the establishment of the *Canadian Race Relations Foundation Act 1991*, that the vision of Canadian

¹⁴Nonetheless some Indians hired a Japanese vessel called the *Komagatamaru* and arrived in a continuous journey from Hong Kong. Despite this the passengers were not allowed to land on shore and after several of them had died the ship was turned back to India where on arrival 20 more people died in a clash with the colonial police. These exclusionary policies targeted Asians at a time of massive European immigration.



multiculturalism changed from a focus on culture towards one of equity and the elimination of racism and discrimination. Thus, the meaning of multiculturalism was expanded to emphasise race relations.

The focus of the *Multiculturalism Act 1988* was mainly on equality measures for all Canadians. Of its nine principles, eight deal with equity issues; only the ninth refers specifically to culture. The Act provides a framework that enables minority groups to combat racism and discrimination, to seek social justice, and to develop a social structure in which openness to diversity is the norm. It was an attempt to build an inclusive and just society, opening up a common space. Since Canada's adoption of multiculturalism as an official policy in 1971, the cultural diversity of Canadian immigrants has been promoted as a key component of Canadian identity.

India

The Indian Constitution (1950) is a multicultural document that not only safeguards the rights and identity of minority groups but also make provisions for both their special treatment and implementation mechanisms for the special policies. Article 29 (1) states that any section of the population will have the fundamental right to conserve its distinct language, script or culture. This clause not only safeguards religious and linguistic minorities but also establishes the basis of the federation's ability to accommodate diversity. Having demanded states based along linguistic and ethnic lines during colonial times, the territorial reorganisation of the country after independence was made according to regionally rooted ethno-linguistic communities. The constitutional provisions, and the States Reorganisation Commission in 1953, gave the process great flexibility. Since the creation of India's initial 14 states, major reorganisations since the 1950s has seen the number of new states double, based on linguistic, religious and economic demands. The growing federalisation of the Indian state has been a process of political accommodation of ethnic and linguistic minorities, so that in this sense "multiculturalism is conjoined with federalism" and has proved to be a most effective way of managing diversity and resolving conflicts (Bhattacharyya, 2003:153).

The post-independence multicultural discourse in India has been based on two concepts linked to multiculturalism: nationalism and secularism. Indian nationalism is based on the definition of India as a composite culture in which there is "unity in diversity". Although secessionist movements such as in Kashmir and Manipur continue to plague the country, many more ethno-linguistic/religious demands have been successfully accommodated. The Indian articulation of secularism is inclusive and implies neutrality towards religion rather than separation of religion from public life altogether, such as *laïcité* in France. It was not intended to be a passive tolerance of religions but rather equal treatment of all religions¹⁵. Although there have been several communal conflicts in independent India, on numerous other occasions the State has successfully maintained secularism.

The concept of nationalism involves the need for unity and this implies attention to equality issues in a country with extreme disparities. India has the world's largest number of destitute people in the world but is also a country with a large number of immensely wealthy people. In addition to great economic differences, social inequalities based on gender, caste and class have long been a feature of Indian society. To deal with this, equality for Indians amongst diverse social inequalities was made a basic feature of the Constitution of India, and it provides several political and structural measures for accommodating multicultural diversity. But the Constitution goes further than equality provisions to provide special conditions for historically disadvantaged groups such as women, Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Backward Classes (OBC). While it does not define the word "minority", it refers to minorities based on religion and language and their rights are carefully defined.

The Scheduled Castes, known as Dalits, are the former untouchables of various castes who have been historically marginalised and kept at the bottom of the societal hierarchy for centuries. The

¹⁵In lived reality this does not always work out, perhaps because of the overwhelming Hindu majority.



Caste system is a feature of Indian society and cuts across all religions in the sub-continent. Dalits are spread all over India, and are socially, educationally and economically disadvantaged compared to the general population. The constitutional provision of Reservation¹⁶ or preferential treatment is a conscious attempt to restructure historical inequalities towards social justice by increasing both access to higher education, and political representation, through quotas. The constitutional provision of Reservation directs that a percentage of seats are reserved for SC, ST and OBC¹⁷ groups in all public and private educational institutions, parliaments and government services. This approach of a quota that must be met is unique to India and differs from affirmative action in other countries, where the extent of the concessions made to increase the representation of a particular group is at the discretion of the individual institution.

Although 'untouchability' has been banned in the Constitution of India (Article 17) and discrimination based on caste is prohibited, social attitudes have not changed very much. Discrimination prevails and Dalits continue to suffer great atrocities at the hands of upper caste Hindus. Even Muslims, Christians and Sikhs exhibit similar caste attitudes. Reservation has helped to a great extent, especially in politics, but the daily experiences of humiliation have inclined many from this group to drop out of educational institutions. The last decade has witnessed a move to restrict Reservation from the "creamy layer" of the OBC category. The term refers to those members of the OBC communities who are now better educated and economically well off and the move restricts eligibility based on parents' income. Since Reservation for SC/ST is not for their economic benefit but rather for their social upliftment, Scheduled Caste members can still benefit from Reservations even when their parents' income levels rise, because Indian society continues to discriminate on the basis of caste.

Reservation based on caste, however, is paradoxical because a person must claim caste status in order to escape from discrimination based on caste. If caste identity remains a point of entry to claim social rewards, the social category will endure even as it evolves. Furthermore, Reservations contradict the ideal of equality because giving unequal status (preferential treatment) to make conditions more equal negates the concept of equality of opportunity. Paradoxically, fair treatment rather than equal treatment produces equality because people are not born with equal assets.

Furthermore, the "Casteisation" of politics has solidified casteism: politicians manipulate caste identities that appeal to caste-based constituencies to mobilise votes. On the other hand, while SCs and OBCs have not achieved much education, great numbers of them have been very successful in politics.

Impact of Multicultural Policies

Australia

Strong evidence from the Multicultural Policy Index developed by Banting and Kymlicka suggests both Australia and Canada have been the most successful among modern democracies with integration policies that focus on employment, learning the national language and sharing liberal values (Banting & Kymlicka, 2012: 14). A 2009 OECD Report points out that Australia is one of only three countries where the children of migrants generally outperform native born children on reading performance tests (Welch, 2014). However, Jayasuriya points out that the push for "core values" in the recent weakened support for multiculturalism at the Federal Government level in Australia is a push for support of Anglo-Celtic values and a retreat to the assimilationist model of the earlier years. He instead recommends the "civic multiculturalism" model adopted by the states of Western Australia and Victoria which focuses on a "shared identity" by identification with common shared cultural institutions (Jayasuriya, 2005). In 2010, the Australian Multicultural

¹⁶The Reservation of seats was incorporated in the *Government of India Act 1935* and the British institutionalised the caste system. The term Scheduled Castes was used for castes, races and tribes, who were then listed. After independence the complete lists for Castes and Tribes were incorporated into the Constitution in 1950, with government holding the power to change the list as required.

¹⁷The category Other Backward Classes (OBC) is not clearly defined, causing confusion as to who qualifies and therefore in estimates of total population numbers. The Mandal Commission, 1980, listed more than 3000 castes in the OBC category. Backward classes' official proportion of total population ranges from 1% in some Northeastern States to 66% in Tamil Nadu.



Advisory Council released *The People of Australia: Australia's Multicultural Policy*, reiterating that "multiculturalism constitutes the nation's resolve to provide opportunity and security for every citizen, regardless of background, culture, religion or gender; and to assure all who live here of the right to live in keeping with their cultures and languages." It pointed out that there was not really an alternative to multiculturalism because multiculturalism brings innovation, ideas, skills, energy and achievement and makes the country richer in many ways, including in its "identity".

Canada

In his 2010 report on the *Current State of Multiculturalism in Canada*, Will Kymlicka presents "new evidence" of the policy's benefits for Canada. He suggests one reason debate on the benefits of multiculturalism policy recurs is a lack of hard evidence coming from Canadian society to support a case for or against the policy. However, cross-national studies from 2006-2008 show that for a wide range of measures Canada's immigrant integration is more successful than in many other countries. This new evidence highlights that: "(a) the process of immigrant and minority integration is working better in Canada than in other countries; and (b) evidence that multiculturalism policy plays a positive role in this process." (p. 7). According to Kymlicka the level of economic, political and social participation indicates "immigrants to Canada and visible or religious minorities fare better than (in) most, if not all, other Western democracies" (p. 7). To take an example from one of the categories above, *political participation*, research by Adams and Langstaff (2007) indicates "there are more foreign-born citizens elected to Parliament in Canada than in any other country, both in absolute numbers and in terms of parity with their percentage of the population" (pp.70-74). Approximately 30 politicians of Indian background serve in either the federal Parliament or state assemblies, and they include federal ministers and even the premier of a powerful province. In addition foreign-born citizens serve as mayors and other municipal politicians in many large cities. The politicians are not elected from ethnic enclaves. In education, children of immigrants have better outcomes in Canada than in any other Western democracy, and evidence suggests less anti-Muslim sentiment than elsewhere (Focus Canada, 2006). Having an official policy has helped create feelings of security and wellbeing, and pride in the national identity.

Yet some fundamental problems remain. Diversity policies for immigrants have failed to incorporate French Canadians or the Aboriginal issue. Kymlicka acknowledges these have not been adequately addressed in the multiculturalism documents and suggests perhaps it is not possible to have a single set of policies for all three areas, but that rather they may need to work independently. For example, Aboriginals still face considerable racism and discrimination and their experiences are not the same as that of visible immigrant minorities. An emerging problem is that recent immigrants are performing poorly in the economic sector compared to their predecessors. This may be because while Canada attracts and selects highly qualified immigrants, the accreditation process has failed to recognise their professional degrees and experience, and integrate them more productively into the workforce.

India

How well has the policy of Reservations worked in India? Presently 49.5% of places in government institutions are reserved for the special categories, stoking heated debate about a system that excludes almost half of the population from these institutions, for example from access to higher education and professional colleges. On the other hand, caste-based discrimination continues across religious and class lines despite 67 years of constitutional and legislative measures (although these vary widely between states). The upper castes are overwhelmingly dominant in higher and especially professional education despite Reservations. Data from the 2011 Census indicates that over 60% of the total SC/ST population is not involved in any wage earning capacity. Yet the policy has had several positive effects, especially in politics. Reserved constituencies have given



rise to Dalit political parties that challenge Western educated upper class/caste parties, and Dalits have held positions as ministers, chief ministers, and even President of India. Most importantly, the entry of Dalits into an expanding middle-class is the result of better education coupled with economic opportunities due to globalisation. In particular, the second and third generation beneficiaries of Reservation policy (Sheth, 2004:47) have become socially mobile. Although it enables economic mobility, globalisation has a paradoxical effect. It has caused a paradigm shift not only in economic policy but also in education, in ideology and policy, values and goals. The new knowledge-based division of labor and the digital divide affect job opportunities in the global economy for those with less education. Even with increasing literacy and education levels, Dalits still have lower levels of education and lower paying jobs. The state's role as employer is limited and decreasing, whereas the rapidly growing private sector needs certain skills not taught in the public school system. Marginalised groups such as SCs with low levels of education and training are disadvantaged and vulnerable. Quotas may improve opportunities for access to institutions, but will not provide the cultural/social capital needed for jobs (confidence, personality, imagination, motivation and aspirations). Even with legal status, opportunity to access institutions by itself will not work, because inequality in social, economic and educational status defeats the very equality that it aims for. Caste inequalities are created by social arrangements and socially constructed, and therefore very difficult to deconstruct. Social hierarchies and discrimination not only cause pain for those who face prejudicial treatment, but also render affirmative action for these groups less effective. The root cause of continued discrimination in India is the hyper-religiosity, ritual and dogma that sustain the caste-system.

Conclusion

Finally, diversity is becoming more complex, with “super-diversity” in society and “hybridity” in identities. Differences are not merely along ethnic and religious lines amongst people with permanent residency or visitors visas. With globalisation, various categories of people enter a country for varying periods of time and with different legal statuses. Multiculturalism must be able to incorporate them in a hospitable environment. “Hybrid identities” means clear-cut ethno-cultural, linguistic and religious differences are becoming blurred. What does multiculturalism mean to those identities? Multicultural policy must be seen as a work in progress: it is evolving in each country with changing conditions.

Policies on diversity and equity have emerged under various names: in Australia and Canada as multiculturalism and in India as Reservations. In all three countries these policies are dynamic and updated or strengthened as new policies are linked with them. The “multicultural hypothesis” (Berry, Kalin and Taylor 1977) is that state policies enable integration and inclusion. The International Comparative Study of Ethnocultural Youth (ICSEY) carried out in 13 countries confirms that countries with multicultural policies encourage the development of identification with a new national identity among ethnic minorities if their own ethnic identities are publicly respected (Kymlicka, 2010; Berry et al. 2006). In fact, evidence suggests that multicultural policies, such as those addressing issues of cultural and linguistic diversity in educational programs, help create more inclusive and equitable public institutions (OECD 2006).

Legislation and constitutional provisions are important to safeguard these policies. Democracies are prone to problems deriving from the ideological dictates of parties in power. While multicultural policies have generally had bipartisan support in both Australia and Canada, the current governments in both countries are focused on a neo-liberal agenda that sees diversity in terms of markets and economic profit, shifting focus to “selling diversity” (Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002), from equity and humanitarian agendas. In India, the new neo-liberal government is yet to establish an identifiable trend although past experience, at least in the education sector, suggests

the imposition of a particular interpretation of events favouring the dominant Hindu group. In the recent election the victorious party received overwhelming majority support for their platform of economic growth, but its record in state government shows a preference for economic growth at the expense of social indicators. Only time will tell how the marginalised benefit from their agenda.

Thus, despite great progress in multicultural policies and integration of minority groups, all three countries - Australia, Canada, and India – now have governments that are (or are expected to be) in effect rolling back the thrust of inclusive policies, by imposing right-wing agendas linked to the hegemony of traditionally dominant groups. Ultimately, however, diversity is increasingly becoming an inherent characteristic of modern societies, and neo-liberal governments also will need multicultural policies for maintaining peace and economic advantage even if ethical and social justice issues do not spur them.

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Ratna Ghosh

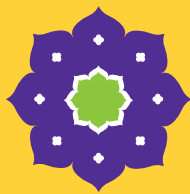
Ratna Ghosh was a Fellow at the Australia India Institute, University of Melbourne in 2014 where she spent two months of her 12-month sabbatical leave. During this period she also spent time as a Visiting Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, and then at the East West Centre in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Born and brought up in the beautiful city of Shillong in the North-Eastern hills of India Ratna was fortunate to have parents who inculcated in her an appreciation of multiple perspectives and diverse ways of thinking. In a one-page article on her (October, 2003 Canadian Edition), *Time* magazine described her concept of multiculturalism and called her one of Canada's "Best in Education".

A holder of two endowed chairs at McGill University in Montréal Canada, Ratna was the first woman Dean of the Faculty of Education in that University. She is one of the few people in Education to be elected a Fellow of The Royal Society of Canada. She is also a Fellow of TWAS, The World Academy of Sciences - for the advancement of science in developing countries, and a Full Member of the European Academy of Arts, Letters and Sciences. Decorated as a Member of the Order of Canada (which replaces the Order of the British Empire) she is also *Officier, L'Ordre national du Québec*. In 2012 she received the Diamond Jubilee Medal from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. She and her scientist husband have the distinction of being the only couple in Canada to have all these (and other) honours and decorations in their respective fields.

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