Accommodating Diversity: Multiculturalism and Classical Liberalism

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ABSTRACT

Liberal states across the world have adopted different approaches to cope with diversity. This article discusses two different models of accommodating diversity: classical liberal approach and multicultural approach. It studies the theoretical underpinnings of these two mechanisms of dealing with group differences. The aim is to explore the question of how far has the liberal integrationist framework been capable of accommodating the concerns of minority rights. The debate between different versions of liberalism continues to try to find a solution to accommodate diversity. Minority communities continue to try to arrive at an arrangement to coexist with the majority community within the liberal order. In practice as well as in theory, accommodating minorities is one of the most challenging arenas for liberalism.

Keywords: multiculturalism, liberal, state, diversity, minority

Introduction

Accommodation and integration of minorities is one of the biggest challenges that democracies face today. A minority is a culturally, ethnically or racially distinct group that coexists with but is subordinate to a more dominant group (Parekh 1994). Minority communities can be categorised into two broad groups. First are the national minorities who have occupied a territory within the country since the inception of the nation state. These are historic communities who are self-governing and have a distinct language and culture (Kymlicka 1995). The second category is that of immigrants who have recently migrated to the nation state. The difference in their history as members of the nation state gives rise to different claims and demands. While the national minorities claim rights over land, regional autonomy, political representation and national symbols, the immigrant communities' demands centre around themes like education curriculum and cultural practices. Accommodating diversity and ensuring the survival of marginalized cultures of minorities pose several difficulties as there are differences and disagreement between the minority and majority community. Finding moral and political answers to these questions has

proved testing for nation states.

Most societies today are heterogeneous in terms of culture. The greater the differences between its communities, the deeper the challenges it encounters in ensuring fairness and equality. The states need to define what the 'range of permissible diversity' is and evolve a mechanism to ensure fair treatment of the minority communities (Parekh 1994). The minorities' demands of equality and desire to preserve its identity sometimes poses difficulties to the state in preserving national unity. Reconciling the two and maintaining a balance between the minorities' demands and need of national unity is essential for the stability and legitimacy of modern democratic state.

Liberal state is confronted by a society divided on racial, ethnic, religious, national and regional grounds. The assertion of plurality within a single political structure confronts the notion of universalism underpinning the liberal tradition. Classical liberalism has shied away from formulating a coherent response to cultural diversity. Multiculturalism has reinterpreted and refined liberalism to make it more accommodating of cultural and moral plurality. Liberal states across the world have adopted different approaches to cope with diversity. This article discusses two different models of accommodating diversity: classical liberal approach and multicultural approach. It studies the theoretical underpinnings of these two mechanisms of dealing with group differences. The aim is to explore the question of how far has the liberal integrationist framework been capable of accommodating the concerns of minority rights.

Classical Liberal Approach

Classical liberal approach to cultural diversity is based on its idea of human beings as atomised individuals, extracted from their cultural background. Hence, the liberal state recognises only individual rights; it does not deem collective rights as being significant to an individual. The liberal state upholds universal citizenship and provides universal rights to all citizens. Universality of citizenship means citizenship status transcending particularity and difference. Equality is conceived as sameness (Young 1989). The emphasis is on universal as opposed to particular, and the commonality between citizens in opposition to how they differ. Universality to the liberals, means that laws and rules should be applicable for everyone in the same way. Laws should be abstract from group particularities, histories and needs; only then every person is given equal treatment. The liberal democratic framework claims to treat individuals equally irrespective of their cultural background. The liberal state purports itself as being neutral towards different cultures, but in reality it is not so. The concept of nation state is not above culture; it has cultural baggage. Thus the liberal democratic framework of treating citizens just as individuals actually ends up perpetuating and sustaining majority culture. Its difference blind approach leads to inequality between different communities.

The liberal framework is based on pluralism which is concerned only with peaceful co-existence

of different communities. It aims only for some degree of freedom for the minorities to exercise their religious and cultural practices. Their relationship with other communities in the public sphere is a non-issue. Pluralism tolerates the presence of difference and does not aim to annihilate it. However, it remains silent on the public status of minority communities. A plural social fabric does not indicate the absence of hierarchy and inequality among cultures in society (Mahajan 2002). The dominant community expresses its supremacy by entrenching its presence in public space. Power is exercised in the domain of the symbolic.   Often the co-existence of different communities is built upon the acceptance of authority of the dominant community by others (Mahajan 2002). Multiculturalism makes a departure from this approach. It raises the question whether different communities have equal status in public domain. Multicultural theorists' concerns go beyond the co-presence of communities and social pluralism. Multiculturalism argues that inequality and discrimination exist even though basic political and civil rights are granted to all. It extends the democratic concern and aims at ending cultural discrimination that prevails despite legal equality granted by liberal state. The multicultural understanding that individuals need to be accommodated not just as citizens but also as members of different communities who possess multiple allegiances, challenges the notion of nation state of classical liberal democracy. Multiculturalism has provided the framework for discussing and debating distinct rights for minorities. It outlines a new idea of democracy which will protect cultural identities.

The liberal approach seeks to confine cultural specificity to private sphere; there is no need of recognition of cultural specificity in public sphere. Brian Barry (2001) advocates the liberal approach of constraining the religious beliefs to the private sphere- a policy of 'privatisation'. He rejects multiculturalists' endorsement of accommodation of religious and cultural beliefs through special arrangements. While he concedes that such special arrangements may be needed because of political reasons, he rejects the claim that these are necessitated by demands of justice. He rejects the claim that egalitarian liberal justice requires exemptions for cultural minorities. He criticises the multiculturalists' argument that the failure to provide special treatment amounts to unequal treatment.   He argues that all laws necessarily affect different groups differently contingent on their behaviour. There is nothing inherently unjust about this. The objective of law is to protect some interests at the cost of others if they conflict with each other (Barry 2001). Any law puts more burden on some people than others. He gives the example that the law banning handguns affects only those who want to possess a handgun.   The criteria of distributive justice does not make the laws unjust for having unequal impact on different groups. He accepts that law having unequal impact may lead to unfairness in a few cases. However, this should be evaluated on a case to case basis for determining how the law is unfair.

Barry (2001) draws an analogy between an individual possessing expensive tastes and deriving less enjoyment from a just distribution of resources to an individual having certain beliefs which results in less satisfaction from just laws. For ensuring equality of enjoyment and satisfaction, it is

not fair to skew the distribution of resources in favour of those who derive satisfaction and enjoyment only from expensive things. People with expensive tastes have no legitimate claim on additional income. Giving extra resources to those with expensive tastes is unfair. Distributive justice requires egalitarian distribution of resources. How much satisfaction a person derives from these resources is not important. Fair treatment requires that everyone has equal access to the resources in a society. What people do with equal resources is a matter of their discretion and action. The issue that someone derives more satisfaction from these resources than others, is not relevant to the concerns of justice and does not make the laws unjust. He gives the example that if a law requires animals to be stunned before they are killed, those who cannot eat such meat because of their religious beliefs, cannot claim that the law is unjust. In fact, Jews and Muslims may reinterpret their religion to consume humanely slaughtered animals.

It can be argued that our tastes can change but our beliefs can't. Since people can modify their preferences, but not their beliefs, justice requires adapting to different beliefs in a way that it does not require adapting to different preferences.   Barry (2001) counters this argument as he postulates that both preferences and beliefs are involuntary. Neither beliefs not preferences depends on choice. People can try to cultivate particular tastes and to strengthen particular beliefs, but success cannot be guaranteed in either case. People cannot change their preferences by an act of will just like they cannot change their beliefs. Hence, if it is wrong to skew political institutions on the pretext of justice in favour of those with expensive preferences, then it is also wrong to skew them in favour of those with expensive cultural attributes.

Barry (2001) further argues that beliefs do not encumber an individual in the way a physical disability can. Yet, the multiculturalists make this claim. Bhikhu Parekh (1997) suggests that special treatment of people in accordance with their beliefs "is like two individuals who both enjoy the right to equal medical attention but who receive different treatments depending on the nature of their illness". The case of a person who cannot drive a car because of physical handicap is very different from someone who does not drive a car because of his religious beliefs. A religious belief prohibiting a certain activity is not analogous to the problem of physical disability. Hence, religious belief does not justify making exemptions in laws for the sake of justice.

Barry (2001) criticises Parekh for blurring the distinction between opportunity and choice. Parekh (1997) writes that "opportunity is a subject-dependent concept", so that a resource does not translate into an opportunity for you unless you have "the cultural disposition …to take advantage of it". Barry argues that such an interpretation misunderstands the meaning of opportunity. The presence of opportunity is objectively real. It does not depend on the 'cultural disposition' to take advantage of it (Barry 2001). He explains with the following example; literacy, access to a library and a bookshop provides an individual the opportunity to read books. However, if your religious beliefs teaches that reading any book other than the religious book is a sin, the

person still has equal opportunity to read books as someone who does not subscribe to this religious belief.

Barry (2001) criticises the approach of multiculturalists to support exemptions in laws for minorities for justice. Different people in the same society following different rules has an invidious impact. Permitting Sikhs to carry *kirpans* (daggers) in public places, according to Parekh does not result in discrimination and unequal treatment against the non-Sikhs because their religious needs are not overlooked, and the non-Sikhs are not adversely affected by respecting the religious requirements of the Sikhs. However, Barry (2001) argues that the right to carry daggers amidst population in which no one else is legally allowed to do the same, leads to inequality of rights. It adversely affects the security of the rest of the population. From utilitarian standpoint, it is not worth giving up the benefits of a law to decrease the cost of complying by a few. Either the law is important enough to rule out exemptions, or the exemptions are significant enough to rule out the law itself. Barry uses the example of Rastafarians to explain his argument. Rastafarians believe that a new level of consciousness which has revelatory significance is reached by the sacred use of *ganja* (cannabis). There are numerous practical complications in making the use of cannabis legal for Rastafarians only. It will be difficult to restrict its use to Rastafarian religious ceremonies, to distinguish between 'genuine' and opportunistic Rastafarians, and it will be impossible to prevent the leak of Rastafarian cannabis into the general population (Barry 2001). It is difficult to implement religious exemption without undermining the legal efforts to restrict the use of cannabis otherwise. The best argument for legalising cannabis for Rastafarians is that it is less injurious to health than alcohol or tobacco which are legal. However, this logic also extends to non-Rastafarians.   This argument legalizes the consumption of cannabis by everybody.

Barry (2001) is critical of the idea that liberalism espouses diversity. Liberalism offers limited group rights, however it is incapable of accommodating deep cultural diversity.   Liberals ultimately espouse values such as individual autonomy. Barry uses Mill's arguments to support the view that liberalism endorses diversity not as an end in itself but as a means to promote individuality. A second line of argument which tries to establish a link between liberalism and diversity is made by Parekh whereby he argues that liberalism should support cultural diversity as it increases the options available to an individual. Barry points out the contradiction in Parekh's argument as Parekh himself says that cultures are not options which individuals can reject or adopt. Hence, the presence of multiple cultures does not enlarge our range of options to choose from (Barry 2001).

The proponents of diversity argue that liberalism does not give enough recognition to freedom of association. Liberalism does uphold the value of a group in so far as it is valuable to its members. Barry (2001) propounds that this is similar to recognising the significance of communities and associations in our wellbeing. Liberalism gives considerable discretion to people in their conduct,

allowing them to voluntarily follow the instruction of the institutions whose authority they acknowledge including religious authority. However, liberalism limits the power of these bodies over their members. The churches can instruct their members how to act as long as the members are free to disobey and not conform without any penalty except expulsion. A church whose members inflict injuries on those who disobey is unacceptable. A liberal state can restrain the powers of parents who due to their religious beliefs do not allow life-saving medication for their children or opt for female genital mutilation. In fact, not just liberal state but any state should prevent injury and death of its inhabitants and hence, can intervene and override the parents in such cases. Parekh (1994) argues that liberalism 'privatises' non-liberal ways of living and does not provide them public recognition and support. Liberalism is committed to equal respect for persons. Multiculturalists argue that as people are embedded in their cultures, respect for persons demands respect for their cultures. However, Barry (2001) argues that equal respect for persons does not entail respect for the illiberal cultures which systematically discriminate against sections of its own people, say women. It however does not mean that groups which contradict equal respect for all should be supressed by the liberal state. The group can impose norms on its members only as long as the sanctions backing these norms are consistent with liberalism, that is, while affiliation to the group may be made dependent on acceptance of unequal customs, those who disobey should not be subjected to losses. The value which allows the freedom of groups to function in illiberal fashion is not regard for their culture but free association (Barry 2001). Group rights protect religious and cultural practices. However, they can be dangerous if they restrict the freedom of members. Group rights can violate the principle of equality of treatment for its own members.

The liberal conception of equality lacks cultural sensitivity. It fails to address the issue of individual's right to culture, as well as the collective right of cultural communities. Liberal theory is based on tolerance. However, tolerance has a negative connotation. It falls short of the respect and recognition that different communities seek. Liberal theory does not address the concern of inter-cultural equality and fails to deal with the challenges faced in a heterogeneous society. The fact that in liberal, modernised, developed nation states identity issues refuse to die down suggests that the liberal framework has not been successful in accommodating difference.

Multicultural Approach
Multiculturalism is an improvement over liberal theory as it takes into account the cultural sensitivity of people. Multicultural theory argues that as people are culturally embedded, ideas such as equality before law, equal respect for persons and equality of opportunity should be interpreted with cultural sensitivity. Thought and action of human beings are located in their cultural backgrounds, hence it is important to understand the system of meanings that characterises their culture. Assimilation of minorities into the majoritarian system of meanings denies their identity.

In a culturally heterogeneous society, there is considerable variation in individual dispositions, needs and capacities. A fair treatment in such a scenario requires identification and interpretation of these differences, identifying the relevant differences and then decide on how to treat them equally in the broadest possible sense. To satisfy this condition, equal treatment may call for differential treatment and departure from identical treatment. Differential treatment entails interpreting the concept of equality with a difference sensitive approach. For instance, equality of opportunity should be effected in a culturally sensitive way. Making wearing skirts necessary to be eligible for certain types of employment effectively closes the chances of Muslim and Hindu women in taking up these jobs. Here, the capacity involved is cultural, and it can act as a disability for some communities. Therefore, equality of opportunity requires the options to be, as far as possible, equally acceptable by different communities. Amartya Sen's idea of capability is abstract and transcultural, does not take into account the cultural constraints faced by the individual (Parekh 1994). Similarly the concept of equality before law should be culturally mediated. For example, a law banning a particular form of dress discriminates against those people for whom wearing that dress is a cultural requirement. Such differential treatment however often arouses fear among the majority community which resists against the state support to minority culture and language. Hence, it is important to make sure that differential treatment does not result in undue discrimination or privilege.

Parekh advocates multicultural model for accommodation of diversity. Multiculturalism believes in the inevitability and desirability of cultural diversity (Parekh 1994). It favours equal treatment of different communities. Equality denotes sameness as well as difference; people ought to be treated in the same way, but the sameness should be sensitive to their differences. (Parekh 1994). The state should respect difference. Multiculturalism propounds that individuals are embedded in culture; culture is an essential aspect of one's identity. Parekh suggests that the state should make exemptions to general laws for enabling a cultural group to maintain its culture. As opposed to monism, multiculturalism believes that there are different ways of leading a good life and hence, there is potential for different cultures to learn from one another. Therefore each culture should be recognised by the state. Cultural specificity ought to be recognised in public sphere.

Parekh (1997) recognises that the capacity of the state to ensure equal treatment to all its communities is limited. The state has a specific identity acquired over centuries which constitutes its way of life. Hence, a state is inherently partial to a particular way of life. The nation state has a distinct identity evolved over a period of time which informs its structure, and it has a cultural bias (Parekh 1997). For example, Muslims are disadvantaged in Western societies because Fridays are working days; Christians in Muslim countries experience same disadvantage. Also, a culturally heterogeneous society has a wide range of deep differences; it is incapable of being equally tolerant and sympathetic to all the differences. Its understanding of other cultures is limited and hence it not willing to constantly change its beliefs and practices to accommodate all

the difference. It can be said, therefore, that it's not possible for any society to guarantee complete equality for all its cultural communities; but this does not imply that the state should not attempt to achieve this ideal. Equal treatment may not be possible but fair treatment is. A society should be sensitive not only to its past but also its present, to the needs of both its majority and minority communities, and to reconcile claims of equality with its historical continuity (Parekh 1997). At the same time, Parekh (1997) argues that cultural equality, though an important value, has to be balanced against other collective values such as social harmony and efficiency. A society can be sustained only through the spirit of good will and accommodation. The language of claims, counterclaims and rights cannot yield the cooperation that is needed by the society to sustain itself. Parekh's reconciliatory approach redeems multiculturalism from the criticism of undermining a society's identity, causing disorientation, and making the society culturally incoherent in the name of ensuring equality for all its cultural communities.

Having said that multiculturalism is a better approach in terms of accommodating group differences, actualising and operationalising it poses certain challenges. It is not easy to define the standards of fairness in a multicultural society. Parekh asserts that equality requires recognition of relevant differences, while irrelevant differences can be rejected. This is a problematic assertion as the decision of what is relevant and what is irrelevant tends to have a majoritarian bias. Parekh argues that liberal society does not need to tolerate those cultural practices that violate the fundamental values that a liberal society upholds and stands for. At the same time, the minority community should be allowed to depart from those values and practices of liberal society which does not have a morally superior status. The essential practices of a community should be allowed to continue. This requires a culturally sensitive and an objective test of what constitutes an essential practice. It requires asking questions such as what an organisation needs to function effactually, how significant a particular cultural tradition is, and whether it can be modified without destructing the identity of the community. (Parekh 1994). Parekh espouses a contextualised and historically sensitive approach to equality. The onus to justify a particular practice should be put on the minority when that particular practice grossly violates the values of the liberal society, and on the majority community in all other circumstances. While a liberal society is committed to equality, it has a cultural foundation which it wants to protect. This limits its capability to treat minorities equally. Asking the liberal society to transform its core beliefs and identity and accommodate all minority practices is unfair and can render the society chaotic. Therefore, it is important to strike a balance between the wish to maintain its cultural identity and to remove inequalities that the minorities face. While striving to maintain that balance, the state must take into account factors such as the significance of a particular practice to the minority's way of life, and the society's capacity to accommodate difference without damaging its stability. Parekh suggests creation of public platforms representing different communities to discuss such complex issues.   Some of the practices which have sparked debate in liberal societies are polygamy, the practice of *talaq*, arranged marriages,

marriages between prohibited relationship such as first cousins and uncle and niece, the Muslim girls' demand to wear   head dress, the Hindu practice of putting ashes of the dead in water bodies, the Sikh demand of wearing turbans than helmets and carrying ceremonial swords, the withdrawing of Muslims school girls from sports and swimming that requires short clothes, and the Jewish demand to trade on Sundays than Saturdays.

The idea of objective necessity, to determine what practices should be allowed or disallowed, should be defined in a culturally neutral way and should be just to both the minority and the majority communities. However, the test of objective necessity should not strip the concerned organisation of its identity. Parekh (1997) explains with the example of hospital nurses; uniforms are not objectively necessary to perform medical tasks. So making it necessary for Muslim nurses is not fair by the yardstick of objective necessity of the hospital.   But this misses the fact that uniform is a symbol of the ethos and self-identity of the organisation. An instrumental view of objective necessity in such cases can incite resentment against the minority community. Uniforms should be retained in hospitals, schools and other organisations of which they are a characteristic feature, but should be open to appropriate adjustments. Such accommodation neither deculturises the organisation concerned, nor 'eclectically multiculturises' them (Parekh 1997). This facilitates reconciliation between the societal tradition with minority ethos, and adaptation to changing circumstances and the integration of minorities in the mainstream society.

Iris Marion Young makes an important addition in multicultural theory by bringing out the necessity of differentiated citizenship and differentiated representation to empower the minorities. She highlights the need for differential treatment and makes a case for differentiated representation forming a rainbow coalition to give different groups a say in the policies affecting them, and to address inequality. She argues that the concern for equality justifies deviation from the principle of identical treatment. Even though citizenship has been officially provided to all groups in liberal societies, some groups are treated as second-class citizens (Young 1989). Universal citizenship rights have not resulted in equality. Differentiated citizenship ensures the inclusion and participation of everyone. It entails special rights that acknowledge group differences. This requires a mechanism of group representation. Liberal democratic structures tend to silence the experience and perspective of disadvantaged groups. It reproduces the existing relations of oppression between different groups. Therefore political institutions should explicitly recognise and represent oppressed groups. Fairness calls for acknowledgement rather than being blind to differences. Equal treatment of culturally different groups is unfair as it denies cultural differences. While the liberals find an inconsistency between the assertion on the one hand, that disadvantaged groups have a right to inclusion, and on the other hand, they have a right to differential treatment, Young argues that there is no contradiction between the two. Groups ought to be enabled to participate in public sphere and institutions without detaching their distinct identities. There is need to de-normalize the manner institutions function and formulate rules by

incorporating the multiple experiences and needs that exist in society (Young 1989).

The socially and economically privileged sections have the material, social and organisational resources that make them capable of being heard in the public sphere. The privileged do not protect the interests of the weak because their privileged status is contingent on the subjugation of others (Young 1989). Also, their social position impedes their understanding of the interests of the oppressed. No group can claim to work in everybody's interest as no group can speak for other groups.   Group representation requires self-organisation of members of the group which results in collective empowerment and helps in articulating their collective experience and interests. Group members should deliberate on issues and articulate proposals on behalf of the group through democratic platforms. They should discuss amongst themselves what policies will best promote their equality, and there should be a mechanism through which their judgements can be communicated to the larger public.   They should be given a voice in how policies affect them and they should give policy proposals themselves. They should also be given veto power with regard to policies that affect them as a group directly (Young 1989). Group representation ensures just outcome in democratic decision making. By giving them a choice in deliberation and decision making, real needs and interests are expressed in a full and free manner.

Group representation also helps in maximising knowledge and practical wisdom (Young 1989). Because of a different history, group values, relationship with other groups and experience, different groups perceive the meaning of social events in different ways, which contributes to other groups' understanding of the same. Such an inter-cultural dialogue can promote better understanding of society. In the rainbow coalition, each group affirms the specific experience and perspective of other groups (Young 1989). Each group is able to have an autonomous say in the decision making procedure.

Young espouses special rights for marginalised sections of society. She contends that special rights arises not from the need of compensation for any inferiority but from the positive and rightful assertion of specificity (Young 1989). The marginalised groups deserve special rights because the society views difference as deviance and stigma, and hence difference translates into disadvantage. Identical treatment measures everyone with the same norms but there are no neutral norms pertaining to behaviour. The laws, policies and rules of institutions are biased and favour the advantaged groups, because it is they who set these norms according to their own experience. Only when differences of capacities, socialisation, values and cognitive and cultural styles are addressed, inclusion of all groups in different institutions can be ensured. Critics argue that special rights can lead to further stigmatization of difference. But there is need to impart an affirmative meaning to group difference whereby the group can fully uphold its identity and reject the labels by which others call it inferior.

Will Kymlicka is another renowned multicultural theorist who has written extensively on accommodating difference and minority rights. He defends multiculturalism from a liberal perspective. Kymlicka has used liberal arguments to justify minority rights. He argues that unlike what is generally perceived, liberal theory is not just concerned with the relationship between the individual and the state, but also deals with the relationship between the individual and his community and culture (Kymlicka 1989).   He is concerned about the liberal response to cultural plurality and contends that the hostility with which the liberals have responded to the issue of minority rights is problematic and undermines the very foundation of liberal philosophy. Kymlicka highlights that many contemporary liberal-democratic states face important political issues of the rights of minority cultures. And yet, the issue has not received the attention it deserves in the works of recent liberal political theorists such as John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin. He laments that minority rights policies are formulated in a theoretical vacuum.

Kymlicka shows that the resources available within the liberal theory can be used to defend the rights for minority culture. He argues that the relationship between liberalism and minority rights is not antagonistic as is normally supposed. From within the liberal framework, he proves that cultural membership gives rise to legitimate claims (Kymlicka 1989). He uses the arguments of contemporary liberal theories of justice for equal rights and resources given by Rawls and Dworkin, to defend minority rights in multinational states.

Kymlicka (1989) argues that the underlying morality in liberal political thought is to lead a good life; this is our essential interest. He further argues that a good life necessitates the freedom to lead our lives according to our beliefs regarding what is valuable for life and that we examine the beliefs in the light of the information, experience, examples and arguments that our culture provides us. Our collective cultural heritage helps us in judging what is valuable in life. Thus, Kymlicka (1989) argues that the defence of culture emanates from liberal theory as culture provides an individual with guidance which helps him to lead a good life. Therefore, the state must provide each individual with liberty and resources to examine and act on their beliefs of what constitutes a good life.

Kymlicka defends liberalism against the communitarian critique that liberalism espouses abstract individualism. Communitarians criticise liberalism for being insensitive to the benefits and significance of an individual's membership in a community. Michael Sandel (1998) argues that liberals misconstrue the relationship between the individual and her social roles (as cited in Kymlicka 1989). Human beings are culturally embedded and socially constructed. Liberals exaggerate the individual capacity to distance herself from her social relationship and exercise abstract individual choice. Charles Taylor (1994) argues that the capacity for choice is exercised within the social and cultural context. The communitarians criticise liberalism for undermining the community and cultural associations which alone can nurture human lives.

Kymlicka (1989) defends liberalism against the communitarian attack and argues that liberal theory recognises that an individual's moral deliberations are situated in a shared social context. The individualism that liberalism espouses is not antithetical to our shared community. He argues that it is a misinterpretation that liberalism advocates that individuals need to escape social influence to revise their character, beliefs and acts. People do not need to be outside the influence of society to have the ability to question our chosen ends. An individual chooses his goals with the cognitive resources that his culture provides. Hence, cultural membership has an important place in liberal theory. Cultural membership is important for an individual and should be protected.

Kymlicka (1989) cites Rawls' argument that having the social conditions needed to decide what is valuable in life is crucial for an individual's self-respect. We examine different ways of life that have already been tested and experienced. Cultural heritage provides us with a context of choice and range of options regarding our life choices. Therefore, a rich and secular cultural structure is essential to the liberal idea of leading a good life. Thus cultural membership is a primary good about which the parties in Rawls' original position will be concerned about (Kymlicka 1989). Hence, cultural membership is an important criterion for distributing benefits and burdens in the liberal theory of justice. Kymlicka also counters the possible argument that since people require cultural context to make sense of their lives, this purpose can be served by any culture, and hence, one can allow the minority cultures to disintegrate and assimilate to another culture. Kymlicka postulates that people are embedded in a constitutive way in their cultural community. People's upbringing cannot be erased and they cannot be transplanted from one culture to another. Cultural membership is a source of emotional security and affects our sense of self-identity, self-respect and agency. Hence, it is important to respect an individual's cultural membership. The minority communities may face disadvantages due to unequal circumstances. Using Dworkin's 'endowment insensitive' theory of liberal equality, Kymlicka (1989) argues that some form of collective insurance is needed to set off the disadvantages that minority cultures face. Hence, the provision of minority rights is justified. Kymlicka's work is a creative extrapolation of the theoretical tenets of Rawls and Dworkin to justify multicultural rights. He is able to establish cultural membership as a distinct factor in considerations of justice and rights which many contemporary liberal scholars such as Rawls and Dworkin had failed to do.

Conclusion

Multicultural theory marks a significant advancement over classical liberalism. It has opened up new arenas of enquiry and debate regarding minority rights. The debate between different versions of liberalism continues to try to find a solution to accommodate diversity. Minority communities continue to try to arrive at an arrangement to coexist with the majority community within the liberal order. In practice as well as in theory, accommodating minorities is one of the most challenging arenas for liberalism.

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