

Liberal State and Multiculturalism: Confrontation or Compromise?

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Classical liberalism with its genesis from Enlightenment took a negative approach to cultural diversity and minority rights. It does not recognize identities based on ethnicity, gender, cultural, nationality. Modern liberalism's commitment to cultural diversity and minority rights emerged out of criticisms from within and outside. Modern liberalism recognizes and accommodates cultural diversity through institutional and policy mechanisms. However, modern liberal states are not free from tensions and conflicts. The competitive demand for accommodation and recognition by various communities and groups lead to instability in contemporary liberal democracies.

Key Words - Liberalism, Multiculturalism, Cultural Diversity, Communitarianism, New Social Movements.

The demand for “recognition” of diverse cultural and ethnic identities constitutes a perennial problem in modern liberal states. This demand arose as a reaction to the western liberal political tradition which for quite some time ignored the issues of minorities and other cultural identities. The liberal political ideology recognized individual as a rational human being and ignored the concerns of multi-ethnic and multicultural society. Accordingly, it was believed that when individuals are rational creatures, recognition of other identities would jeopardize the individual self. Moreover, the classical liberalism makes a distinction between public and private spheres. Liberalism excluded certain groups based on ethnicity, race, sex, age from the public sphere. The private sphere is not considered within the domain of ‘political’. In private sphere, cultures, rights and concerns never find a place in the political activity.

The idea of liberal state emerged as a monolithic political institution based on the majority will of the people. The liberal state which is based on the assumptions of free, rational equal individuals subsequently came under criticism from many quarters for its negative attitude towards cultural identities and groups rights. Various scholars in the classical liberal tradition interpreted state in terms of majoritarian culture and majoritarian rights while ignoring the essence of diversity in culture and rights of the minority. The classical liberal state considered assertion of cultural identity as antithetical to national unity. It viewed that all individuals as

citizens deserve equal respect and equal opportunity for self-realization irrespective of their cultural status.

Multiculturalism: A Movement and Ideology

Multiculturalism, as a movement and ideology, emerged as a reaction to liberal state's negative attitude to recognizing minority cultures and group rights. In academic debate the idea of multiculturalism is described as the process of recognizing the identities of cultural disadvantaged minorities. In a more specific way it recognizes the distinct cultural identities of members of a pluralistic society. As Parekh says that "multiculturalism, then, is about cultural diversity or culturally embedded differences" (Parekh, 2000: 3). It is argued that multiculturalism demands the protection of the rights of minorities and develop extensive notions of citizenship and democracy that include those minorities that are excluded on racial and ethnical criteria (Solomos, 2001: 206). The different cultural identities demanded not simply recognition of their claims to a (just) shared of the social pie, but more important, recognition of their distinct identities as members of particular cultural communities within society (Kukathas, 1998: 686).

The idea of multiculturalism emerged as a response to marginalization of minorities based on cultural discrimination. The dominant cultural groups occupy a predominant role in society denying the same to other groups. The idea of multiculturalism emerged when the liberal state in western society confronted with the challenge of immigrant minority communities. Multiculturalism challenged the basic assumptions of liberal state. According to it, the liberal state in a multicultural society should not be considered as an epithet of majoritarianism. The state should not draw a distinction between individual rights and minority rights.

Multiculturalism 'Embedded' in Liberalism

Broadly, there are two dominant views regarding the relationship between liberal state and multiculturalism. Firstly, multiculturalism 'embedded' in liberalism and secondly, multiculturalism 'counterpoise' to liberalism. The first argument is that liberalism accommodates diversity and tolerates differences. In this view, liberal state is not hostile to divergent cultural groups, on the other hand, recognizes the role of minority groups in democratic politics. As Mahajan puts it, "liberalism celebrates diversity but only at the level of individual. It values

differences of tastes, opinions and life styles but is less accommodative towards differences of culture” (Mahajan, 2002: 32). Kymlicka’s approach to multiculturalism is based on the tenets of liberalism. Liberalism, in its true sense, based on equal values of individual. Kymlicka does not find any incongruity between liberalism and multiculturalism. According to him modern interpretation of liberal state is more prone to recognizing and accommodating cultural differences in society. For instance, Kymlicka argues that minority rights were an important part of liberal theory and practice in the nineteenth century and between world wars (Kymlicka, 1996: 50). For him individual rights can be fulfilled once state recognizes cultural identities and cultural rights.

The assertion of ethnic and cultural minority for the recognition of rights, thus, does not go against the spirit of liberal state and on the other hand strengthens the very foundation of liberalism. The values of liberalism such as human dignity, autonomy, liberty, tolerance are in tandem with the values of multiculturalism. Kymlicka, for instance, says that “accommodating ethnic and national differences is only part of larger struggle to make a more tolerant and inclusive democracy” (Kymlicka, 1996:19). Parekh, an ardent supporter of multiculturalism, develops a liberal theory of multiculturalism that respects all values of liberalism. According to him, “. . . since different cultures embody and realize different values, none of them can be judged superior to the others” (Parekh, 2000: 90). Kukathas views are more or less similar to that of Kymlicka. In his opinion “liberalism is not hostile to difference because its response to the fact of diversity is to recommend toleration of different groups, or cultures, or associations which might be found within society” (Kukathas, 1997: 142).

It is further argued that liberal democratic thought has been traditionally committed to protecting social diversity and this would include ethnicity-based claims for political recognition. At the same time, it has upheld the integrity and sovereignty of nation-states and this has meant that liberal states are often reluctant to give political recognition to communities and groups in the public sphere. The classical liberal state is treating all people as free and equal individuals and all persons as citizens deserve equal respect and equal opportunity for self-realization. In this context, the liberal state is denying group rights and group rights are considered incompatible with liberalism and only individual rights are recognized.

Enlightenment Universalism and Rationalism

The classical liberal states' apathy towards cultural diversity came from the very foundation of Enlightenment. Enlightenment Universalism propagated the idea of some what a 'melting pot' syndrome in which all cultural identities are melted into a common identity. It was even argued that Enlightenment Universalism is blind towards specificity and diversity as it does not recognize identity based on ethnic, gender, cultural or nationality. In this context, multiculturalism is considered as a counter Enlightenment movement. The negative attitude of classical liberal state towards cultural diversity can be seen in the context of the values of Enlightenment like universalism, rationalism, individualism and egalitarianism which are upheld by classical liberalism.

The idea of reason emerges within a particular culture, society and context in which human beings live. Rationality emerges out of certain cultural instinct. The contention of classical liberalism is that since individuals are rational human beings – recognizing identities or diversity is going against the conception of 'rational'. The centrality of individual and his concerns occupied a predominant role in liberalism as reaction to feudalism which seldom gives individual preferences. Liberalism as an ideology gives centrality to individual and his concerns and traditional bonds based on feudal relations are considered as hurdles for individual 'self'. In this view, the objective of liberalism was to recover 'self' from feudalism. Feudalism was based on the collective identity either serf or masters. Liberalism emerged as an ideology of modernity, critical of the values of feudalism and acted as an emancipation of individuals.

Multiculturalism poses a challenge to the Kantian Enlightenment ideas. The proponents of multiculturalism argue that individual and his/her existence in the society is determined by cultural values and recognizing cultural diversity leads to the preservation of their particular cultural identities. The opponents of Universalism, however, raised serious doubt about the idea of a free, equal and rational individual. When wider cleavages exist on the basis of religion, ethnic and gender identity, each identity makes an individual his or her own self. Multiculturalism developed as a critique of the wider conceptions of enlightenment philosophy such as universal reason, values, etc. It emerged as a critique of uniculturalism stand taken by Enlightenment. It is argued that "multiculturalism tends to accept and build upon the Nietzschean rejection of rationalism. There is no universal truth or justice. Thus, multiculturalism fights for

the rights of women and minorities in a new way: by subverting the truth-claims of all who would exclude them” (Melzer, Weinberger and Zinman, 1998: 3).

Liberalism as an ideology emerged as a result of Enlightenment Universalism. The universal values suggested by liberalism often acquired a colonial content – protecting western interests, ignoring non-western political activity. These universal values are based on the universal rationality of human beings. By affirming its commitment to universalism and rationalism of Enlightenment project, liberalism ignores the distinctiveness of society and assimilates minority cultural identities into the dominant majority, heterogeneous identities assimilated into majority culture and thereby established a homogeneous society. Enlightenment universalism destroyed diversity and it imposes homogenizing values that have the potential to kill the specificity of cultural communities.

The idea of enlightenment universalism and rationalism strengthened the idea of monoculturalism. Enlightenment is talking about certain universal rights to people which were rejected by diverse cultural groups. The enlightenment values of the liberal state were challenged by certain developments in the West. For instance, the US ‘melting-pot’ model was challenged by the civil rights movements of the 1960s. Under the ‘melting-pot model’ all the immigrant cultures are mixed and amalgamated without state intervention. The melting pot implied that each individual immigrant, and each group of immigrants, assimilated into American society at their own pace. The demand was based on the recognition of equal dignity. The early 1970s witnessed the emergence of the multicultural movements at first in Canada and Australia and then in the USA, UK, Germany and elsewhere.

The liberal conception of rationality is the product of time-with the emergence of capitalist free market economy. Rationality is associated with capitalist and market relationship. The liberal conception of reason disconnects people from social traditions and community practices. The philosophical rationalists like Rene Descartes and Baruch Spinoza claimed that reason evolved not through individual sensory. Moreover, Kant’s idea of reason is taking people out of their social setting. Kant in his widely acclaimed article “What is Enlightenment?” proclaims that Enlightenment is man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man’s inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another (Kant, 1784). This definition talks about the isolation of human beings from their settings. Reason is opposite to

morality. Postmodernists claimed that all grand theories and metanarratives emerged out of Enlightenment tend to entail exclusion and coercion, the elimination of diversity and difference. Foucault, for instance, viewed that Enlightenment reason is preaching the domination of one community over others (Foucault, 1979). Moreover, enlightenment rationalism highlights the racial superiority of some groups and considers others as inferior to their culture and identity. This racial superiority strengthened colonialism and euro centrism. Edward Said argues that the eighteenth-century Enlightenment formed the origins of ‘Orientalism’ (Said, 1978). The racial supremacy in Enlightenment reason is ignoring the cultural specificities of non-whites.

The Social Contractual Tradition

The majoritarian orientation of liberalism goes back to the fundamental tenets of the social contract theory. The social contract theory as advocated by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Rousseau proclaims that the liberal state emerged as a result of the contract entered by the majority. The classical liberal state adopted a somewhat neutral approach towards cultural diversity. It gave equal treatment of all people irrespective of their cultural differences. Since it believed in free and equal rational individual, no distinction was made between majority and minority and their cultures. The classical liberal state was reluctant to accept minority rights and it recognized only individual rights. The minority-majority debate developed in the later course when critiques questioned whether minority interests are protected by the majority. They argued for recognizing cultural identity of minority as a precondition for enlarging the scope of freedom. The liberal state was created by a social contract aimed at protecting the ‘individual self’.

Liberal –Communitarian Debate

The intellectual origin of multiculturalism is found in liberal –communitarian debate and the new social movements. Communitarians challenged the basic assumption of classical liberalism based on the atomic individualism. Liberal individualism views individuals as right-bearers outside the social and communal context. Liberals develop some values which are considered to be rational, non-subjective in nature which have universal implications. Liberal universalism is taking people out of their social and temporal contexts. The first criticism against the classical liberal idea of homogeneity came from the communitarians. The liberal-communitarian debate in political theory primarily concentrated on the recognition of cultural diversities.

Communitarians at **the outset** rejected the liberal argument of that recognizing cultural diversity would be a threat to national unity and integration.

Classical liberal state championed the cause of individual rights and innate qualities of individual. Communitarians, on the other hand, criticized the liberal view of individual self. The atomistic view about individuals raises the question of being insensitive to the values of community. The communitarians demand group rights and collective rights along with individual rights guaranteed by the liberal state. The liberal state has to recognize group rights. Identity claims should be viewed as rights in particular needs. Communitarian thinkers like Charles Taylor and Richard Walzer, on the other hand, have been sensitive to the issue of protecting cultural diversity in a society and they have supported multiculturalist policies which would recognize and respect cultural communities and their practices, at least in the sphere of civil society' (Joseph, 1998: 19).

The negative attitude of liberalism towards cultural identities was questioned by communitarians. As Joseph argues that "liberalism emphasizes the irreducible distinctiveness of individuals while communitarians refuse to postulate an individual who can be thought of as prior to his/her social embodiment" (Joseph, 1998: 124). Contesting the liberal argument that recognizing cultural diversity is part of liberalism and communitarians view that liberalism no longer recognizes cultural diversity, it is argued that "the logic of communitarian assertions is to map out communities in their difference and uniqueness and to assume a shared culture for a group. Individual identities then are assumed to emerge from group identities" (Joseph, 1998: 28). The cultural rights of the cultural minorities and groups needs to be protected by the liberal state. The different values and life practices existing in communities needs to be protected by the liberal state.

The communitarians have argued strongly for the needs for political protection of community identities. The vehement criticism came from communitarian thinkers such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel and Charles Taylor. Charles Taylor is critical of liberalism for its indifference towards cultural diversity. According to him, "liberalism is not a possible meeting ground for all cultures, but is the political expression of one range of cultures, and quite incompatible with other ranges" (Taylor, 1994: 62). A modern democratic state demands a 'people' with a strong collective identity (Taylor, 1994: 145). According to this view a common

identity cannot be established by annihilating other identities. The recognition of diversity and minority rights makes liberal democracy more 'inclusive (Taylor, 1994: 145). Iris Young promotes a notion of group solidarity against the individualism of liberalism humanism Young, 1990). It is viewed that liberalism fails to address the nature 'embeddedness' in a particular time, place and culture. Communitarians view that the role of the state is to ensure the health and well-being of the community life. The classical liberalism believed in 'unencumbered self' detached from pre-existing social norms. Communitarians, on the other hand, developed 'situated self' – the self is situated in the context of social roles, practices and situations.

In Charles Taylor's view social recognition is central to the individual's identity and self-worth, and misrecognition can gravely damage both. The liberal conception of autonomous individual was rejected by many critics of liberalism. It seldom discusses the values of community in which the individual belongs. On the contrary, the values of community influence individuals. Charles Taylor says that "the objective of a liberal democratic culture is to respect – not to repress – ethnic identities and to encourage different cultural traditions to develop fully their potential for expression of democratic ideals of freedom and equality" (Taylor, 1989: 89). The advocates of multiculturalism claimed that individual freedom can be fulfilled once state recognizes cultural identities and cultural rights. Taylor viewed that enlightenment ideal of 'disengaged reason' gives an opportunity to individuals to disassociate from the communal settings and communal bonds (Taylor, 1989).

Communitarians are critical of liberal model of the 'self', individual develops their 'self' of their own not related to society and community. They are critical of liberalism's belief in individual capacity to make meaningful choices. The liberal conception of self is derived partly from Immanuel Kant and Enlightenment philosophy. Communitarians rejected the individual self claiming by saying that individual setting cannot exist prior to or outside social settings and communal attachments. The self of an individual is shaped by the subjective values and traditional perceptions of the communities. Communitarians like Mac Intyre views that the role of state is to develop and protect practices that encourage the development of human excellence (Hampton, 1998: 183). Liberal individualism disconnects individuals from community and the state insulates individuals from community practices. According to this view, each individual develops identity, talent and pursuits in the context of a community. As Etzioni argues that "the

social conditions that enable individuals to maintain their psychological integrity, civility and ability to reason” (Etzioni, 1995: 16). Individuals enjoy their rights only within the social set up. As Etzioni says that it is ‘when community (social webs carrying moral values), breaks down, the individual’s psychological integrity is engendered, and a vacuum is generated which invites the state to expand its role and power; when community is properly cultivated, by contrast, the kind of citizen liberals take for granted flourishes’(Etzioni, 1995: 17).

New Social Movements

Like communitarians, other streams of protest against liberal state’s approach towards cultural identity came from New Social Movements. The new social movements like feminist, blacks and Dalit movement in India too questioned the homogenization of cultural diversity. Such level of criticisms came on the pretext of culture’s relation to knowledge and power. The impact of civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s rekindled the debate on multiculturalism in USA. As Pichardo argues that NSM envisages “both macrohistorical and microhistorical elements of social movements. On the macro level, the NSM paradigm concentrates on the relationship between the rise of contemporary social movements and the larger economic structure and on the role of cultural in such movements. On the microlevel, the paradigm is concerned with how issues of identity and personal behavior are bound up in social movements” (Pichardo, 1997: 411).

New Social Movements involve the identity based movements which are trying to protect particular way of life. As Kauffman claims that identity claims are the most distinctive feature of New Social Movements (Kauman, 1990: 69-80). Unlike Old Social Movements which are associated with the problems of industrialization and material benefits, New Social Movements are giving a new twist to the demands. As Pichardo notes that “New Social Movements question the wealth-oriented materialistic goals of industrial societies” (Pichardo, 1997: 414).

Modern Liberals and Cultural Diversity

The modern liberals rectify the mistakes committed by classical liberalism in recognizing cultural diversity. For instance, liberals such as John Rawls, Joseph Raz and Will Kymlicka recognize the importance of cultural diversity by the state. Rawls’s theory of justice deals with the question of moral plurality. It recognizes the depth of moral differences. Rawls intention

was to build a liberal egalitarian society. Although Rawls' political liberalism is limited to the political realm, its moral and cultural reach is extensive. As Parekh argues that "since Rawls is primarily interested in moral diversity, he pays little attention to ethnic, cultural and other forms of diversity, the politics of recognition and difference, and more generally to the nature and importance of culture" (Parekh, 2000: 90). Rawls is attempting to make an arrangement between liberalism and cultural diversity in his theory of justice. Joseph, for instance, sees that Rawls' political liberalism as proving a practical answer to the problem of negotiating cultural differences (Joseph, 1998: 130). The contemporary liberal thinkers like Raz, Kymlicka and Rawls redefined liberalism with an idea of promoting cultural diversity. They argue that recognizing cultural identity is an important element in respecting individual autonomy and even dignity. The autonomy and dignity of individual are promoted by recognizing cultural diversity among the people. Multiculturalism is the core of liberalism, because liberalism encourages the principle of toleration. It reflects liberal pluralism and recognizes diversity of culture – the implications for democracy and democratic governance. Raz views that since cultures are not becoming internally oppressive and, on the contrary, are promoting freedom, identity and well-being, they have to be respected and accepted. Even minority culture, which cherishes liberalism, should be respected (Raz, 1986).

Modern liberals believe that deepening of liberal democracy is not possible without recognizing cultural difference. When the state recognizes diversity liberal democracy is able to reach out to the larger sections of the society. Liberal multiculturalism emerged as emphasising equal recognition of cultural groups. Recognising difference cannot be treated against the universal principles of Enlightenment. The advocates of multiculturalism argue that existence of cultural communities does not go against national identity.

How Does Modern Liberal State Recognize Diversity?

The role of liberal state and its institutions in protecting multicultural society include the opening up of institutions for all. The state institutions should not be dominated by the numerical majority of the society. As Charles Taylor has argued that "governments have an active role to play in recognizing the value of various cultural traditions within the society and in formulating policies – language laws, system of education – that help to preserve and strengthen these

cultures” (Hampton, 1998: 245). Rawls’ first principle, for instance, is talking about the opening up of institutions for all directed towards recognizing cultural diversity.

The liberal state recognizes the difference at the institutional level. Institutional accommodation involves recognizing diversity in institutions – legislature, executive, judiciary and bureaucracy and opening up of political offices to different cultural groups. Thus, institutions recognize plurality is the primary step for accommodation. The policies adopted by state can effectively protect minorities against social exclusion, discrimination and racism. Recognition of cultural diversity means the removal of exploitation and politics of redistribution. The Constitution of India guarantees certain constitutional provisions for protecting multiculturalism. Articles 29 and 30 provide special provision for ensuring the minority rights.

Recognizing minority identity and culture by the state is to ensure distributive justice in a liberal society. Rawls, for instance, considered culture as a primary good. In this context, Rawls theory of justice is going beyond the limits of juridical justice recognizing multi-culturalism. Language policy is another area where the state can interfere and promote multiculturalism. Since language is the medium for communication in deliberative process, the predominance of majority language often prevents the minority cultural identities in participating effectively in deliberative process.

Culture is for a long period of time considered a resource in education. A multicultural state strives to promote the minority language in educational curriculum. The cognitive aspect of culture enables the transmission of practical and theoretical knowledge from one generation to another. Education policy of the state should be oriented towards promoting the values of multiculturalism and accommodating the cultures of minority community. It is argued that the liberal state is promoting multicultural ethos. The State monitors that each cultural group should deserve place in the media or in educational institutions (Bhargava, 1999: 15).

State is inculcating the values of tolerance in a multi-cultural society. J. S. Mill in ‘On Liberty’ suggested that toleration is of fundamental importance to both the individual and society. The role of the state is to inculcate the feeling and assimilate the culture of minorities not to force it. Sen is talking about two basically distinct approaches to multiculturalism, one of which concentrates on the promotion of diversity as a value in itself; the other approach focuses

on the freedom of reasoning and decision-making and celebrates cultural diversity (Sen, 2006: 150).

However, recognizing cultural diversity goes beyond the question of tolerance. As Parekh argues that “while acceptance of differences calls for changes in the legal arrangements of society, respect for them requires changes in its attitudes and ways of thought as well” (Parekh, 2000: 2). The state in multicultural society ensures tolerance. Further, “toleration of diversity is of great importance in a multicultural context. Both state management and individual practice require some level of toleration, once there is knowledge about the differences” (Nye, 2007: 114). It is argued that “successful multiculturalism and cultural engagement requires tolerance on all sides –mutual tolerance” (Nye, 2007: 114).

Recognising national minorities demands certain substantive actions from the state. The constitution makes some provisions for the special rights of the minorities. It has to recognize the fact that minority cultures are often distinct from that of the majority. In other words, it is to promote plural values of the different communities in the society. As Festenstein says that “value pluralism allows that there may be other forms of self development or well-being apart from those which encourage individual autonomy. Indeed, part of what it means to have a socially diverse society is that it should contain associations and groups which are not autonomous in their practices”(Festenstein, 2000: 83).

Redefining the Role of Liberal State

The role of the liberal state in a multicultural society is to prevent conflicts between various cultural identities in society and to ensure successful management of inter-cultural conflict. As Nye argues that, ‘multiculture is not necessarily about preventing such conflict, but rather one of the challenges of multiculturalism is to ensure that any intercultural conflict within society is manageable’ (Nye, 2007: 118). As Parekh argues that ‘in a multicultural society the state belongs to them all, and the fact that some of them are in a minority should make no difference to their claims on it. They should all enjoy their fair share of public support and resources’ (Parekh 2000: 96). The liberal state in a multicultural society is making a balance between national identity and cultural diversity of specific groups.

The growing importance of multicultural society's reconceptualization of citizenship calls for the representation of all sections into mainstream political process. The advocates of multiculturalism question the liberal conception of citizenship. By granting citizenship right to individual, liberal state proved its apathy towards social environment in which the citizenship works. By focusing on the abstract notion of citizenship, liberal state is taking individuals away from social atmosphere. Multiculturalism rejects the goal of assimilation into the political community of the nation-state through citizenship as derogatory to different cultures and also unlikely to be realized without the use of violence (Joseph, 1998: 141). In liberal conception of citizenship, the social citizenship is missing link in the absence of group rights and community rights. As Mahajan put it, "the liberal principle of neutrality as well as the emphasis on universal rights of citizenship has in some contexts, sustained the dominance of the majority community in society" (Mahajan 2002: 23). Multiculturalism recognizes the citizenship rights of minority as a matter of an inclusive society. Multicultural demand forced liberalism to expand the sphere of citizenship. The demand for recognition by various social groups often poses a challenge to traditional liberal conceptions of citizenship.

Problems of Multicultural State

Recognizing diversity does not mean that the liberal state/multicultural state is free from any kind of conflicts and tensions. A liberal state even after the 'recognition' of diversity faces number of challenges. As Hampton points out that "a state in a multicultural society also faces problem when some of its cultures disapprove practices carried on by other cultures in that state or when part of the tradition of a culture has involved the denial of freedom or equality to some of its members" (Hampton, 1998: 246). A multicultural state in the contemporary world is facing lot of problems though formal recognition comes from the Constitution. Liberal democracy provides an opportunity to assert identity. The idea of 'recognition' is a problem for liberal state. The sense of identity creates a sense of 'exclusion' from mainstream. Assertion of one's own identity leads to violence (Sen, 2006). According to Sen, ". . . identity can be a source of richness and warmth as well as of violence and terror, and it would make little sense to treat identity as a general evil" (Sen, 2006: 4).

Brian Barry poses a liberal response to multiculturalism and its criticisms of liberalism. According to him, multiculturalists are denying the equality of basic liberties and fair

opportunities that define equal citizenship. Moreover, multiculturalists undermine the economic claims of the poor by trying to shift political focus away from question of distributive justice to a 'politics of recognition' of different cultural groups (Barry, 2001: 325). Barry is skeptical of the 'rule-and-exemption' approach to religious and other minorities advocated by multiculturalists. Barry cautiously approaches the liberal ideal of equal treatment. In his opinion, multiculturalism is a regressive ideology and it is "anti-egalitarian", if not in intention, then certainly in effect. The privileges it accords to special interests are conducive to politics of 'divide and rule' that can only benefit those who benefit most from the status quo (Barry, 2001: 325).

The emergence of identity politics and the mobilization of new identities politically widened the debate on multiculturalism. The emergence of various kinds of identity politics seems to be a threat to liberal state. In identity politics, people identify themselves with group rather than claiming a broader nationality. In identity politics people define one's political and social identity and interests purely in terms of some group category: race, ethnicity, language, gender, religions etc. The assertion of identities in politics is not merely because of absence of political recognition but because of the lack of access to economic resources. A large number of liberal states in the contemporary world are confronted with the question of recognizing multiple cultural identities in their society. Various cultural groups are demanding their rights from the political authority. Theoretically state extends some kind of recognition by means of constitutional guarantees but particularly far away from it.

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