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Multiculturalism: A Progressive Term in Modern Era

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Abstract

Cultural Studies has developed into diverse and lively international intellectual field. Culture is now considered as great source of Art and Literature. It is also known to everybody that words in a language come from culture, and literature exists in a language. That is why cultural critics turn to culture to elucidate Literature in its proper context. Cultural Studies is not easy to define as the term. It is elusive and therefore it is not an approach rather it is a set of practices. Cultural Studies has now entered a new phase. All natives may be secured in Multiculturalism, they can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and more over there is a sense of belongingness for them. The context in which multiculturalism is discussed matters much while defining the same. Also the concept of multiculturalism is constantly changing as more people make their voices heard to continually growing audience. Multiculturalism is considered as a social and political movement in the United States.

Keywords: multiculturalism, cultural studies, interdisciplinary, identities, dignity, diversity

Today, Cultural Studies has developed into diverse and lively international intellectual field. It gained currency with the publication of Richard Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy* in 1957 and Raymond Williams book *Culture and Society* in 1958. As Stuart Hall, one of its founders has put it- "Today cultural studies exist everywhere, especially in the United States where they have come to provide a focal point for interdisciplinary studies research and the development of critical theory"(11). Cultural critics now take culture as source and not just a representation of art and literature. It is known to everybody that words in a language come from culture and literature exist in a language. Therefore cultural studies or criticism has had important effect on the study of literature. It has introduced cross and interdisciplinary perspectives.

Cultural studies initially developed in Britain. Raymond Williams' term 'Cultural Materialism', Stephen Greenblatt's 'Cultural Poetics' have become significant in the field of cultural criticism and cultural studies. Raymond William is of the opinion that cultural studies is not easy to define as the term is elusive and therefore it is not an approach, rather it is a set



of practices. The self recognition, dignity and the affinity is ensured in the term multiculturalism; that is why there is a feeling of certainty amongst the Canadians. They are unburdened due to the integration in diverse cultures. The racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding discourages, hatred, discrimination and violence. It values the diverse perspectives people develop and maintain through varieties of experience and background stemming from racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation and class differences in our society. It strives to uphold the ideals of equality and freedom on which the United States is based and includes respect for individuals and groups as a fundamental to the success and growth of our country. It includes elements of Marxism and other terms with sociology, urban studies etc. those fields that focus on social and cultural forces that either creates community or cause division and alienation. We observe in it a Cultural Mixture of separateness which is also called hybridity or diversity.

Addition to it, the concept of multiculturalism is constantly changing as more people make their voices heard to a continually growing audience. In the United States, multiculturalism is a social and political movement and position that holds differences between individual and groups to be a potential source of strength and renewal rather than of strife.

W. L. Guerin and other critics have pointed out in *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* in the following words-“Arising amidst the turmoil of 1960s Cultural studies is composed of elements of Marxism, New Historicism, Feminism, Gender Studies, Anthropology, Studies of Race and Ethnicity, Film Theory, Sociology, Urban Studies, Popular Culture Studies and Post-Colonial Studies: those fields that focus on social and cultural division and alienation”(240).

Cultural Studies goes beyond the frontiers of a particular discipline, it encourages intertextuality. For instance, in the countries like United States, Britain and Australia, the percentage of equality, mutual respect and open mindedness has been growing as far as the multicultural societies are concerned.

In addition to this British materialism, New Historicism and American multiculturalism are also used as synonyms. It had enhanced as a trademark of the separate development of cultural studies in the USA, Australia, Canada and many other countries. There is great merit in studying literature from stand point of culture because a text is built and exist in culture. Literature depicts human beings and their nature in given context. Human nature being universal (for the basic emotions of life like love, respect, hate and jealousy etc.), transcends culture. The remark of Henry Louis Gates Jr. is remarkable about



Multiculturalism, he states, "Ours is a late twentieth century world profoundly fissured by nationality, ethnicity, race, class and gender. And the only way to transcend those divisions to forge, for once, a civic culture that respect both differences and commonalties is through education that seeks to comprehend the diversity of culture"(xv). The context for Gates remarks was the vitriolic debate that erupted in the USA in the 1990s over the question of multiculturalism, which involved educationalists and politician alike.

The issues related to cultural diversity and multiculturalism challenged to monoculturalism. In many ways the term 'Multiculturalism' rather like the term 'Postmodernism' is reductive and believes the plurality of disciplines, practices, themes, debates and approaches that have come to articulate the sphere both within the USA and Britain. as an example, is that the precise relationship between Pedagogy and Knowledge, between Knowledge and Power, between Power and Politics and between Politics and Empowerment. How should multiculturalism be defined and, how should the curricula in educational institutions reflect it? Should it's pluralistic, or should it retain the private/ public dualism of integrationist formulas and maintain the centrality and universality of the tradition?

What is the relationship between institutionally managed multiculturalism and critical multiculturalism? The conservatives like Allan Bloom, opt for cultural hegemony held together by the 'Western Canon'. On the other hand pluralist such as Henry Louis Gate and Edward Said embrace the idea that is, in modernity, culture is hybrid and interactive, and is therefore never contained cleanly in the form of ethnic groups but travel between groups, multiplying and continually mutating. Afro-American culture, from music to performance, to painting and to literature is oven out of its conversation with Western art and artists. The responsibility of educationalists, therefore, is to shift potential crises into mutual understanding. Multiculturalism left liberal multiculturalism and critical or resistant multiculturalism. The conservative multiculturalism promotes the idea of integration. The assumption that 'Witness' is not form of ethnicity but the norms and standard against which all other forms of ethnicity must be measured. Liberal multiculturalism based on creating gender equality through education and legislation is extended to other racial and ethnic groups. The left liberal emphasizes confirming the authentic experience of different communities. The last version that is critical multiculturalism is considered to be transformative view of multiculturalism which is directed that differences exist between and among groups.



Therefore, it would not be exaggerated to say that cultural criticism like any other school of criticism such as formalism, structuralism and post structuralism has its validity and identity.

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