Chapter 1
Multicultural Issues: A Comparison of India and Europe

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Abstract

The chapter introduces the general framework of the multicultural debate in India and Europe, highlighting the points of originality and convergence. India and Europe, despite having different historical paths, today find themselves facing similar problems regarding the possibility of developing inclusive societies, capable of integrating diversity and difference in a context of democratic participation in common social and political life. India had to face – well before the multicultural debate was consolidated in the West – the question of including cultural difference in the definition of national unity. The central point of the multicultural comparison was the effort and need to build unity, solidarity and a sense of common belonging starting from the recognition of cultural differences. In many respects Europe has had to deal with an inverse problem: how to recognize the plurality and multiplicity of cultural differences starting from a deep-rooted idea of internal homogeneity which constituted the ideological and rhetorical basis of the formation of European nation states. A narrative of homogeneity and cultural purity which has fostered both internal cohesion and competitive distinction with other European states, but which is unmasked in its claim to naturalness by migratory phenomena and globalization processes. After briefly introducing the different ways in which multiculturalism has been

interpreted in the different European and Indian contexts, the chapter analyses the main criticisms advanced to the idea of multiculturalism. It highlights how, despite the theoretical and practical difficulties of multiculturalism, European and Indian societies cannot but consider cultural difference as one of their constitutive and structural elements.

Introduction

The issue of cultural diversity is central to contemporary political and social debates. Globalization processes have intensified the perception and awareness of the importance that different forms of life have in defining the experience and social orientation of individuals. The question of recognition and respect for cultural diversity has become a central and debated theme of national policies, encouraging, on the one hand, new demands for inclusion and, on the other, new forms of identity closure.

Multiculturalism as an approach to state and politics locates the individual as firmly embedded within a cultural group or community. In political theory, multiculturalism finds itself at a crossroads between liberal and communitarian positions. Does multiculturalism, in acknowledging community membership of the individual increase the scope of rights and entitlements of the individual or does it, in giving primacy to the community over the individual, thwart individual autonomy, choice and agency? On the other hand, how effective is multiculturalism's emphasis on the community in affirming and reinforcing citizenship rights in the modern state? These have been some common predilections in political theory when addressing the welcome themes of cultural diversity, plurality and their recognition in states claiming to be multicultural.

Cultural diversity is articulated best by the theoretical framework of multiculturalism. While most societies are characterised by pluralism i.e. the existence of groups based on distinct religions, cultures, languages etc, multiculturalism goes a step further than just a mere existence and acknowledgment and seeks to embrace and include this diversity in state policy. To this end, multiculturalism has been a desirable policy choice for many states, especially in the 20th century. This interest in multiculturalism emerged amidst international events such as the post-Second World War migrations in Europe and the conflict between the English and French populations in Canada. Canada in fact was one of the first Western countries to adopt multiculturalism as an official policy in the 1970s. The United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Germany, and other countries in Europe also attempted to accommodate diversity and minority communities within this policy. In the United States, multiculturalism developed as a critique of the classic assimilationist "melting pot" model, which has been criticized for placing too much emphasis on the unifying force of civic duty at the detriment of specific attention to cultural embeddedness.

In South Asia, questions of cultural diversity were addressed by an inclusive Constitution and were ensconced in policies of secularism and religious neutrality. In some countries like Sri Lanka, multiculturalism was acknowledged, albeit grudgingly as is evident in the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. In countries like India, the Constitution accommodated certain distinct identities of citizens more within the context of the secular neutral state in the form of multiculturalism. In either of the above cases, the point to be reiterated is the sovereign state's decision to officially address questions of diversity and distinctiveness and institute mechanisms to realise and negotiate them. This brings us to another important point i.e. that multiculturalism, unlike liberalism, communitarianism and a host of other traditional ideas/schools of thought is relatively new, nascent and hence has been a site for contestation as much as it has served as a platform for recognizing culture as a legitimate identity in political and legal dimensions.

The contradictions and ambivalences of the debate on multiculturalism

Although multiculturalism has established itself as a viable political and cultural horizon for the inclusion of cultural difference within democratic societies, it has not been free from harsh criticism. Although a series of empirical research (Vertovec & Wassendorf, 2010; Banting & Kymlicka, 2013; Korteweg & Triadafilopoulos, 2015; Back & Sinha 2016; Johansson 2024) highlights how the implementation of multicultural policies continues to be a fundamental tool – and widely used by Western governments – for the promotion of fair and effective integration policies, critical and contrary voices have spread and amplified to the point of constituting a new common sense which sees the 'defence' and 'recognition' of difference as a point of weakness and a threat to national identity. In part, the critical controversy surrounding multiculturalism is due to the success of the term. As often happens with words that become a common part of the political and everyday lexicon, the term 'multiculturalism' has ended up taking on different meanings which have often hindered an open and rational debate. It is possible to identify at least four levels of meaning of the term multiculturalism in current debates (Colombo, 2011; Berry & Ward, 2016; Safdar, Chahar Mahali & Scott, 2023).

A first level concerns the use of the term to 'describe' a presumed characteristic condition of contemporary societies. This reading, characteristic of sociology, highlights how contemporary societies are characterized by the presence of multiple groups that have different values and normative references. Multiculturalism tends, in this case, to highlight the effects of globalization processes which lead to a more frequent experience of difference and tend to

weaken, or transform, the forms of social cohesion and solidarity recognition in a single community. It is intended to describe a condition that has become constitutive, and structural, of contemporary societies: a widespread and permanent presence of diversified cultural references (languages, beliefs, values, traditions, identifications, lifestyles, and expectations for the future), that coexist within the same social space. Multiculturalism is used here to "take note" of the current condition, inserted in a global horizon, characterized by change, flow, and mixing. In the "sociological" perspective, attention is mainly focused on the difference/solidarity polarity and the questions raised refer to the possibility of guaranteeing a sufficient degree of solidarity and social cohesion, of tolerance and communication between differences, without giving up their respective specificities and without ceasing to fight forms of discrimination and misrecognition. It questions the relative positions of power of different cultural groups and how these affect the distribution of obligations and privileges within society.

A debate closer to the perspective of political philosophy tends to use the term "multiculturalism" to foreground normative and justice theory problems that arise when we try to review the assumptions of liberal democracy – founded on universalism and equality of individuals in public space – taking into account cultural differences. It highlights the need to reformulate the liberal ideal of Good and Right by considering not only individual freedom and personal fulfilment but also the recognition of difference and the importance of cultural beliefs and cultural belonging. This means overcoming, or integrating, the liberal principles of guaranteeing individual freedoms to enhance the community dimension and make room for the recognition of collective rights. The extreme positions in this debate tend to contrast a strenuous defence of liberal democracy, with its absolute aversion to any manifestation and recognition of cultural difference in public space, with an explicit and extensive recognition of community rights. In the first case, the theories of justice developed within the framework of liberal democracy are seen as the only model of coexistence capable of offering participation and inclusion to all individuals, regardless of ethnic origin, religious faith, culture, gender and social condition. Difference, according to this perspective, must be protected and guaranteed in the private sphere but cannot and must not be used to claim special treatment in the public space. In the second case – a communitarian perspective – the need to overcome the liberal model, its apparent neutrality and its misleading universalism because it is incapable of guaranteeing equal dignity and respect, especially to minority groups, is underlined. From this perspective, only a full recognition of cultural rights – truly collective rights – can guarantee minority identities against the assimilationist claims of the majority group. The concrete multicultural debate develops between these two poles, seeking coherent forms of respect for individual freedom and recognition of the relevance of collective belonging.

The problematic dimension that catalyses the discussion in the field of political philosophy is represented by the difference/universalism polarity, while the relevant questions are related to the possibility of reconciling respect for cultural differences without renouncing democratic principles.

A vision closer to the interests of political science tends to use "multiculturalism" to define the concrete conditions within which to implement a series of social policies for the inclusion of minorities. The central theme, in this case, is the need/possibility of defining social policies that favour civil coexistence and the participation of different cultural groups in collective life. From the perspective of political science, the issue at stake in multiculturalism is to create inclusion policies that allow the development of social cohesion and cooperation while respecting mutual differences. The central issues refer to the dimension defined by the polarity recognition of difference/respect for the principles of equal opportunities. The central themes of discussion concern the possibility of promoting the inclusion of minority groups, the management of conflicts through the recognition of cultural differences, the reconciliation of cultural diversity with political unity, and the development of a shared sense of national belonging.

Finally, "multiculturalism" can take on an ideological character and be used to indicate a concrete model of future society and prescribe the actions necessary for its realization (or to counteract its realization). The emphasis on respect for difference fuels both reactionary and populist projects that claim the need to build adequate barriers so that differences can be preserved and reproduced autonomously, freeing them from the threat of contamination with other differences, and progressive projects that see multiculturalism as a criticism of the hegemonic and despotic tendencies of the majority group. While supporters of multiculturalism emphasize the need to transform power relations that allow the dominant group to derive privileges from the imposition of its own culture as canon, opponents accuse it of promoting social fragmentation and parallel lives, undermining the functioning of the state and welfare policies (Cantle 2001). The polarity highlighted in this case refers to the pairs stability/change and continuity/discontinuity. The problems raised are mainly located on an ideological level, considering cultural difference as a disintegrating or innovative force of social bonds and as a central factor in the dynamics of social change.

Beyond the differences in meaning attributed to multiculturalism, it is however possible to identify a central nucleus of issues that have characterized this political proposal since the 1970s. By denouncing the impracticability and undesirability of assimilation proclaimed by the philosophy of the melting pot, multiculturalism advances a different model of coexistence in the same common space: a coexistence that recognizes and assigns adequate attention to and respect for cultural differences. Multicultural perspectives emphasize that

pluralism, rather than homologation, and debate, rather than consensus, constitute the defining characteristic of democratic coexistence.

Multiculturalism thus introduces a different way of looking at cultural differences and conceiving models of coexistence within the same public space without ignoring the diversity of histories, values, ethical and moral orientations, vocabularies and symbolic resources available to individuals and groups. So, despite their complexity and variability, it is possible to identify some lines of claim that animate the multicultural debates:

a. to promote greater and effective democratic inclusion, ensuring equal access and participation for all members of society, without making inclusion conditional on prior assimilation into the dominant group; that is, to promote the full realization of democratic ideals, which are often enunciated but not fully realized;

b. to overcome previous relations of domination and exclusion of minority groups, acknowledging the violence and exploitation carried out by members of the dominant group, who imposed their rules and ideas by presenting them as 'natural' and 'universal';

c. to involve all members of society in the debate on the democratic 'rules of the game' and let everyone have a voice in discussions about common decisions on how to define public space and how to build a fairer and more just society; here there is a request for a revision of the current democratic rules so that social justice is increased by criticizing the privileges and hegemonic position of the dominant group (of the male-white-heterosexual-Christian-...);

d. to ensure adequate recognition and respect for cultural differences, actively combating stereotypes and prejudices that negatively depict minority groups by trapping their members in belittling and dismissive representations;

e. to recognise the right to be different, to maintain one's religious beliefs, sexual identifications and preferences, lifestyles and moral orientation without being discriminated against or excluded;

f. to give prominence to the 'collective', 'cultural' dimension, to cultural belongings and rights, and not only to individual rights.

Multicultural demands are therefore not reduced to a 'defence' of difference but demand: 1) greater inclusion and greater equity, 2) a revision of the rules of democratic coexistence that allows positions of domination and privilege to be subjected to criticism and 3) greater respect for difference, its recognition and the freedom to be able to manifest it in the public space. A truly inclusive society, the multicultural claim argues, can only be a society in which people can be free to enter the public space without giving up their specificities and histories.

European multiculturalisms

While in other Western nations, such as the USA, Canada and Australia, multiculturalism has mainly concerned the issue of the inclusion of marginalized internal minorities and the recognition of the rights of indigenous populations, in Europe the debate has focused on migration. Since the Second World War, Europe has transformed from a land of emigration to a land of immigration. The post-war reconstruction and subsequent industrial development created a strong demand for manpower, which was satisfied above all by making use of a massive migratory flow. The migrants largely came from former colonies or poorer regions of southern Europe: Algeria and other sub-Saharan African countries for France; India, Pakistan and Caribbean countries for Great Britain; Suriname and Antilles for the Netherlands; Southern Italy and Turkey for Germany. Until the 1970s, immigration in Europe was essentially conceived as temporary: a phenomenon destined to cease and reverse its course when the demand for labour had been remedied. It was with the oil crisis of the early 1970s that industrial growth slowed down and immigration emerged as a problem. The old, consolidated models of immigrant integration – essentially based on the idea of assimilation (France), temporary guest workers (Germany) and subordinate inclusion (Great Britain) – showed their limits and the question of recognizing cultural differences as a central element of coexistence in multicultural societies has arisen.

How to organize social relations in societies characterized by the coexistence of different groups with different cultural references has become a critical aspect of European democracies, often dividing the field between those who saw multicultural policies as a development and expansion of democratic values and practices and those who instead considered them responsible for weakening social cohesion, and for encouraging the development of communities living parallel lives. Within this common scenario, the multicultural debate has developed in a partially different way in relation to the different national contexts.

In the 1970s, Britain essentially recognized itself as a multicultural society. Multiculturalism has mainly been associated with racial and religious discrimination. A series of regulatory interventions have sought to counteract any practice that disadvantaged a particular racial group, directly or indirectly. The government has sought to promote racial and ethnic equity, often through multicultural education for primary and secondary school students. Since the early years of the current century, multicultural policies have been accused of promoting fragmentation rather than social cohesion. Starting from the Cantle Report in 2001, the need to strengthen social cohesion rather than promote the recognition and valorisation of cultural difference has been insisted on. Multiculturalism has been accused of promoting 'parallel lives', that is, of creating conditions whereby groups with different cultural orientations and traditions live side by side

without mutual dialogue. After a series of urban clashes which often featured young white British people and young British children of immigrants, as well as the Islamist attacks on the London Underground in July 2005, "community cohesion" has become a favoured concept over multiculturalism (Meer *et al.*, 2015). Although at the level of political discourse multiculturalism is defined as a failure, the situation of the actual policies implemented is more articulated and complex. As Grillo (2010: 63) observes:

> «Multiculturalism is under pressure across the political spectrum, in a climate dominated by the event of 2001 and much tension around the Islamic presence. But faith communities are promoted, and in sites where hybridity is produced (school, playgrounds, mixed marriages, the arts, music) there is a multiplicity of voices, languages, dialects, registers, joking, playing, crossing, engaging in dialogues through which new identities and relationships emerge».

'Pillarization' over a long period guided the Dutch public orientation towards cultural difference. It was a system in which different cultural communities (both religious – mostly Catholic and Protestant – and secular) were given their own space through the creation of confessional schools, associations, newspapers, trade unions and political parties. Pillarization focused on forms of integration aimed at preserving cultural identity and specificity. Within this system, no group, secular or religious, was considered more important than another. Since the 1990s, Dutch policies have tended to be defined as multicultural and, rather than inspired by the valorisation and defence of cultural difference, are more oriented towards the socio-economic integration of migrants and their inclusion in the labour market (Prins & Saharso, 2010). The model came under substantial criticism and revision after the assassination of Pim Fortuyn in 2002, a far-right politician who advocated the need to limit immigration and promote Dutch values and identity, which were, in his view, threatened by an invasive and prevaricating Islamist culture. Multicultural policies are more frequently and explicitly accused of not being effective and minority groups are blamed for not wanting to integrate into Dutch society despite the opportunities offered to them. The idea spreads that the lack of integration of migrants was due to their lack of knowledge of the Dutch language, values and traditions. To this end, policies are promoted that impose a series of constraints on obtaining Dutch citizenship, such as knowledge of the Dutch language, culture, and history (Bonjour & Duyvendak, 2019). Muslims, in particular, are accused of not wanting to integrate and of wanting to preserve cultural orientations – such as the failure to recognize a necessary distinction between religion and state, between religion and law – incompatible with a democratic society.

Given the emphasis on *laïcité* and indivisibility of the Republic and the hostility to the manifestation of cultural diversity in public space, France has often been considered "the multicultural anti-model" (Aubry de Maromont, 2021).

Individuals are thought of, in their relationship with the state, as 'citizens' – that is, members of the French people – and not as members of sub-state cultural communities. The Republic is one, and all French citizens enjoy equality in the public space as 'French'. Making requests for recognition and differential treatment on the basis of one's cultural difference is not intended to be acceptable and compatible with the ideals of the Republic. The French state does not acknowledge "identity" or "cultural belonging" as a political force or a legitimate basis for mobilization and claims-making (Chabal 2024). Minority cultures must abandon their specificities when acting in public space. Fidelity to the principle of *laïcité* leads to making a clear distinction between public space and private space. No manifestation of cultural difference is accepted in public space; it can find free expression only in private space. Given these premises, the French debate on the management of cultural differences has focused on the manifestation – or, more precisely, on the need to deny such manifestation – of differences in public space, with particular regard to religious dress codes. A long and broad debate has concerned in particular the use of the traditional Muslim headscarf, the hijab, and, in a more general form, the use of conspicuous religious and political symbols in public schools. In 2003, the Stasi Commission, established by President Chirac and composed of authoritative French intellectuals, proposed banning religious symbols in schools. The suggestion became law of the Republic in 2004 (Simon & Sala Pala, 2010). The 'headscarf ban' was followed by other bans, all aimed at prohibiting the manifestation of cultural differences – and in particular the manifestation of religious identity – in public space. In 2010, a law was passed prohibiting clothing that conceals the face in public space; in 2016 mayors in dozens of French coastal towns banned swimwear that 'ostentatiously' showed one's religion (the so-called burkini) (Nielson, 2020). Although, on paper, France has remained strictly faithful to the principle of *laïcité*, in practice – and not unlike other European nations – it has in fact implemented soft multicultural policies (Samers, 2020; Chabal, 2024). Despite the official declaration that difference is not relevant and has no consideration in the public sphere, in the practice of urban administration municipalities have had to deal with the need to manage cultural pluralism, contain forms of discrimination and promote participation and integration of minorities.

In Germany "multiculturalism" has taken on the same more negative connotation that it had in France. Multiculturalism was not officially conceived as a desirable outcome, an effective way of managing social pluralism, but as a threat to national cohesion (Fisher & Mohrman 2021). Germany has never defined itself as a nation of immigration, but rather as a nation that needs immigrants (Plamper, 2023). For years, strict adherence to the principle of *ius sanguinis* considered Germans only those who descended from German parents. Only in 2000 was the principle of *ius sanguinis* softened and accompanied by a mild *ius soli*, according to which children born in Germany to non-German

citizens could benefit from German citizenship provided, at birth, at least one of the parents had legally resided in Germany for 8 years or an unlimited residence permit for three years (Howard 2008). Germany has therefore long evaded the issue of cultural pluralism, considering itself a 'homogeneous' nation capable of 'hosting' immigrants, but without considering them part of the nation. The numerous immigrants from rural areas of Turkey and several southern European countries were considered guest workers or *Gastarbeiters* and were viewed as temporary residents who were expected to return (Mitra, 2022). Multiculturalism has primarily been interpreted as an ideology foreign to German political and cultural history. The compass that has oriented the policies aimed at managing cultural difference is that of German *Leitkulture* (leading culture), i.e. the promotion of an assimilationist approach to integration (Miera, 2007). However, there has been no shortage of multicultural policies 'from below'. Integration projects and measures have been implemented at the local level based on specific needs generating multicultural policies without officially creating a unified multicultural approach (Schönwälder, 2010). Actions promoting the integration of migrants, such as German language courses and social assistance for foreigners, have been the result of pragmatic responses to existing circumstances rather than forms of deliberate implementation of a particular long-term strategy. Much of the work was delegated to welfare organisations, trade unions, churches, and migrant associations (Miera, 2007).

The multicultural debate in Italy has followed – albeit for very different historical and political reasons – a path similar to the German one. Italy has historically been a nation of emigration. Until the end of the sixties, migratory flows towards Italy were very low and mainly linked to migration from former Italian colonies. These flows mainly concerned people from Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea, employed in Italy, especially, in domestic work (Marchetti, 2013; Andall, 2000). With the oil crisis, the resulting industrial crisis and the restrictive measures implemented by the traditional destinations of migratory flows in Europe – mainly France, Great Britain, and Germany – the arrivals of immigrants who come to Italy in search of employment are strengthening (Colucci 2018). It was only in the 1990s that migration to Italy became an evident phenomenon. In this period, immigration from North African countries was accompanied by a significant flow of people coming from the Balkan peninsula following the tensions that accompanied the dissolution of Yugoslavia and then from Eastern Europe following the fall of the Wall of Berlin and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. At the same time, connected to the expansion of globalization processes, migratory flows from Africa, Asia and Latin America also gained strength. Starting from mid-2010, the presence of immigrants has stabilized to about 8.5% of the population (Ismu 2024). Although immigration has become a structural component of Italian society, the issue of the necessity or not to introduce severe limits to the entrance of foreigners remains one of the

main nodes of political confrontation. The public debate remains monopolized by security issues, while an organic and informed discussion is missing on how to implement integration policies that allow coexistence in the differences.

> «Both center-right and center-left governments have muddled through, oscillating between humanitarian and protectionist responses to the large numbers of migrants arriving via the dangerous southern sea passage, while leaving decisions on the form and degree of integration to the provinces. Indeed, Italy has had no clear stance on diversity. It does not celebrate cosmopolitanism through an explicit multiculturalist project, as in the UK and the Netherlands, nor has it taken a stance of "civic nationalism" along French Republican lines, which would insist on the equal treatment of citizens within a clear framework of Italianness» (Hill, Silvestri & Cetin, 2015: 227).

Italy struggles to consider itself a multicultural nation and foreigners residing for a long time and with regular residence permits are not fully considered part of citizenship.

As in Germany, in Italy citizenship is acquired *jure sanguinis*, that is, if a person was born or adopted by Italian citizens. The last general reform of citizenship dates back to 1992. The two main axes of the Law no. 91 are *ius sanguinis* and *ius conubii*. Citizenship can be requested by foreigners who have resided in Italy for at least ten years and meet certain requirements. In particular, the applicant must demonstrate that s/he has sufficient income to support her/himself, that s/he does not have a criminal record, and that s/he does not have any reasons that impede the security of the Republic. Another way to obtain citizenship is to marry an Italian citizen. In this case, citizenship is granted when, after marriage, a person has legally resided in the territory of the Republic for at least two years, or after three years from the date of marriage if resident abroad. If compared to the previous law passed in 1912, the 1992 reform has strengthened the privileges towards foreigners with Italian origins, appearing as an "ethnic law" (Gallo et al., 2006: 111). Concretely, the acquisition of citizenship by those who have even distant Italian origins became relatively easy; while its acknowledgement by foreigners without Italian or European origins has become even longer, more difficult, and discretionary, so much that it is possible to talk about the existence of a "legal familism" (Zincone, 2006).

The fate is not easier for the so-called second generations. Children born in Italy do not automatically have Italian citizenship. They can apply for it when they turn eighteen but need to fulfil a series of requirements in order to become Italian citizens: their parents had to be regular at the moment of birth and have stayed regular for the entire period between the birth and the majority of the son or the daughter; moreover, the second-generation children must prove they have been always living in Italy without any interruption. If so, they can declare their intention to become Italian citizens but only before they are nineteen.

These provisions for second generations do penalize children who end up paying for the "faults" of their parents: around 50% of foreigners who currently have a regular stay permit do have a previous experience of irregularity and it is not so rare that parents decide to raise their children in the country of origin, at least for a short period.

Meeting in Italian cities – so also in small villages – people with different shades in the colour of the skin, who dress in different traditional clothes, which speak a multiplicity of languages, or can choose among a wide range of 'ethnic' food and cultural events have become a constitutive element of daily experience. However, this experience of everyday multiculturalism (Colombo & Semi, 2007) is not accompanied by an open multicultural policy. The policies of inclusion, recognition, and enhancement of cultural differences as well as those that contrast discrimination and racism remain in charge of local institutions and, above all, voluntary associations (Ambrosini, 2013; Barberis & Boccagni, 2014). The issues relating to the cultural differences in Italian society – in addition to the issue of security, fuelled above all by the exponents of the right – have mainly concerned religion and school. In the first case, the debate focused on freedom of worship – especially linked to the possibility of building mosques or teaching religions other than Catholic in Italian schools. In the second case, the debate mainly concerned the insertion of the teaching of foreign languages – especially Arabic and Chinese – in lower secondary and high schools. In both cases, the lack of national regulation has led to a marked differentiation in the national territory (Campomori & Caponio, 2017).

Samuele Davide Molli, in his contribution *Migration and religious diversity in Italy. Exploring an evolving and contentious process*, shows how the advent of an unprecedented and increasingly complex religious pluralism can be considered one of the main transformations induced by migratory phenomena in Italy. A religiously diverse society is principally the result of immigrant minorities' activism in recreating places where to address spiritual and social needs. Elaborating on results collected for a large research project, the chapter discusses the various ways in which immigrants have re-settled and re-adjusted their faiths in a new geographical and political context. It further investigates how State institutions and local communities have reacted to this historical change. The contribution highlights what Molli calls the «Italian paradox»: a diffused presence of immigrant religious minorities in cities and in various post-industrial scenarios who, however, frequently lacks an adequate juridical and social recognition.

The chapter *Multiculturalism in educational practices: the Italian case* by Angela Biscaldi and Anna Chinazzi raises the relevant question of how to promote inclusion and recognition of cultural differences in schools. The authors argue that the anthropological lens suggests a deconstruction of multicultural education that cannot be effectively pursued without critically analysing the meaning of culture. Taking inspiration from some ethnographic cases in the Italian

context, Biscaldi and Chinazzi identify three potential pitfalls associated with a naive misconception of culture: generating excesses of culture, reifying culture, and overlooking differences within cultures. The assumption of a dynamic and constructivist conception of culture – in place of an essentialist and reifying vision of cultural differences –, the authors argue, recognizes the need to replace the 'multicultural' educational model with the 'intercultural' one. The chapter shows how Italian school policies promote an intercultural approach which can enable promising educational practices if practitioners share a critical understanding of its theoretical and axiological assumptions.

The reality of European multiculturalism

Even if multiculturalism does not enjoy an excellent reputation in the current European political-social climate, the question of the coexistence, with mutual respect, of cultural diversity in the public space constitutes a central and problematic issue. The current debate tends to find ways to overcome the contentious aspects of multiculturalism, at least in some of its interpretations more oriented towards the mere preservation of cultural differences.

The limits of the concept of multiculturalism and the critical debate that it has fuelled in Europe and, more generally, in Western societies are discussed in the contributions of Paola Rebughini and Enzo Colombo. Paola Rebughini in her chapter *Multiculturalism to the Test of Post/Decolonial epistemologies* underlines the historical connections that link multiculturalism in Europe with its colonial experience. The author highlights how the diversity that characterizes the debate on multiculturalism and the forms of implementation of multicultural policies in the European context is closely linked to the different colonial histories of individual nation-states. The adoption of a post/decolonial approach, Paola Rebughini suggests, going beyond a narrow methodological nationalism offers important critical tools to reconsider cultural differences or a blind and sterile alternative between subaltern integration and social balkanization. Enzo Colombo, in his contribution *Should We Give up on Multiculturalism*, critically evaluates the alternatives that are being proposed to address the limits of multiculturalism. The author highlights how the criticisms of the essentialist and reifying readings of cultural differences that have characterized some more superficial but very popular conceptions of multiculturalism lead the intellectual and political debate to highlight the aspects most oriented towards promoting real spaces for discussion, inclusion, and participation. Thus, alternative conceptual proposals emerge – interculturalism, cosmopolitanism, superdiversity, conviviality, just to name the most widespread – which aim to correct the limits of multiculturalism. While underlining the usefulness and richness of these alternatives, the contribution supports the importance of maintaining a strong link with the motivations and arguments that started the multicultural debate

which, rather than suggesting a mere preservation of existing differences, posed the issues of their recognition and their effective inclusion in the social fabric based on a critical review of the criteria for defining public space, citizenship and belonging.

Although multiculturalism is politically presented as a failed project, in reality, European societies cannot help but consider cultural difference as their constitutive and structural element. Despite populist and nationalist calls for a return to a reconquered – in reality never existed and only dreamed of – ethnic and cultural purity, European demography, economy and social life is characterized by the presence of different social groups with different cultural references. Although official policies tend to reject multicultural policies, normative and pragmatic interventions to recognize cultural differences and promote coexistence between different groups are widespread and constitute a central element of interactional dynamics in European societies. These are 'bottom-up' multicultural policies, rooted in local practices, and 'soft', more oriented towards building spaces for dialogue and inclusion rather than the mere protection of cultural differences.

The interventions aimed at the coexistence in public space of different groups with different cultural references mainly concerned (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010: 3):

a. education: changes to the curricula that would contribute to a better mutual understanding of different cultures; greater sensitivity to the specific values and beliefs of different cultures; greater tolerance in clothing and eating habits linked to specific religious rules; teaching the mother tongue of the parents' countries of origin; specific support for learning the local language, when necessary;

b. religion: permission to follow the religious practices of the different religious communities, especially concerning holidays, places of worship, and burial rituals;

c. public recognition: with support for ethnic associations and the promotion of moments of meeting and cultural exchange; raising awareness among public service operators to avoid cultural misunderstandings; adequate space in the media for the voices of different groups;

d. fight against discrimination: with greater sensitivity in monitoring forms of discrimination and racism; awareness campaigns towards stereotypes and prejudices that paint minorities as inadequate and inferior.

It is not possible to identify a specific 'European path to multicultural societies' but, despite this, it is possible to grasp a progressive greater awareness of the cultural plurality that characterizes European societies. Avoiding a parodic and superficial multiculturalism that limits itself to exalting cultural purity by emphasizing the need for its preservation from contamination with other presumed pure cultures, European multicultural practices, developed above all

'from below' in the practices of daily interaction, have introduced greater sensitivity to the importance of cultures and the need for their adequate recognition for a more open and inclusive society.

Indian Multiculturalism

Even though, multiculturalism as a framework is emerging to be a significant political situation in many of the European countries and in USA, in India, it has evolved along with the freedom struggle due to various historical reasons. The ancient Indian thought had essentially libertarian perspective of considering entire world as one's kinsman. Historically, various '*Dharmas*'[1] encouraged heterogeneity and involved conflicts and negotiation. Due to migration, war and change in the political economy, the Autonomy of different political formations and ideas in ancient Indian territories shows acceptance of multiple cultural groups with political power. The Indian cultural fabric from ancient times representing Brahmanism (based on idealist philosophy) and Buddhism (one section of Buddhism based on materialist philosophy) expanded the scope for diversity and conflicting ideas and politics (Chattopadhyaya, 2007). Even though India had Muslim rulers occupying many parts from 7th Century AD till Mid-18th Century AD, different cultural groups not only co-existed but took active part in the governance and various other aspects of the state. In fact, Hindus were given the status of protected persons in return for payment of taxes and loyalty to Islamic state. Even the social intercourse between Hindus and Muslims were never restricted except in occupying few positions in the government. The land revenue administration was in the hands of Hindus, and other cultural groups at the local level (Chandra, 2007).

During the colonial period there has been a constant dialectical interaction and critical relook into the existing cultural practices based on western enlightenment notions. This had many advantages of reviwing the existing practices, but at the same time imposed certain western cultural practices overriding the indigenous cultural practices. Thus such an exercise resulted in assimilation and also refom in Indian cultural practices. The new heterogeneity has led to qualitatively different way of life incorporating both western and India characteristics through negotiations and contestations. According to KN Panikkar, three cultural stream emerged due to this colonial interaction. The first was combination of indigenous and western cultural ideas, the second was disapproval of colonial culture and the third was critical interrogation of indegenous and western cultures to create an alternate culture. Thus the colonial interaction has led to both religious and secular nationalism, which is reflected during the

1 Moral way of living

independence struggle where both cultural and political nationalist were active in pushing their agenda in India (Panikkar 2007).

The conflict between the cultural nationalist, emphasizing on single cultutral identity for India and political nationalist, who emphasized on multicultural society with single political identity has been the major struggle during independence struggle in India. The struggle was extended to Constitutent Assemble (CA) of India as we witness in their debates. Cultural nationalist wanted an exclusive religious state, where the minorities will be either accorded secondary status or pushed out of the country over a period. Even though cultural nationalist wanted to revive the traditional Hindu culture, they were not completely opposed to British colonisers. This was a strategic move to counter the Muslim minorities by getting the state support. One of the Hindu nationalist leader Savarkar has created a conceptual framework for the political hindusm in the name of 'Hindutva' during the beginning of 20th century.

At the same time the political nationalist had the majority support in the Constituent Assembly (CA), where they took a secular position not falling into the narratives of cultural nationalist. This is in the context of partition of India and creation of Pakistan, a Muslim majority religious state. This secular position is still reflecting in Indian Constitution, which is neutral towards all realigions, but at the same time respects all religions equally. Based on the colonial experience, the state took the power to intervene in religious affair to bring about necessay reforms along with protecting the rights of individuals and communities. Thus the whole multicultural framework has been embedded in various provisions of the Indian Constitution, which has been strengthened by the judiciary in the process of interpreting them over a period of time.

One question that comes to mind is whether multiculturalism is an essential pre requisite to the enjoyment of cultural diversity; or does it emerge to address conflicts and contestations that are an outcome of diversity? Both, one can say, depending on where we approach cultural diversity from. In countries like Canada and the UK, multiculturalism emerged to address contestations that cultural diversity posed; contestations that existing mechanisms of representation and plurality that are associated with a democracy could not address. Multiculturalism in these states was pronounced and adopted as an official policy and stand of the state – a stand successive government(s) had to adopt, imbibe and affirm. In countries like India the tumultuous history of social stratification on grounds of religion and caste meant that India would adopt the language of secularism and issues to do with cultural diversity would find resolution within the secular-democratic paradigm. It is for this reason that tracing the discourse on multiculturalism in India is an interesting exercise as one has a vast landscape to examine and analyse the multiculturalism framework. It is with this in mind that the four essays encompassing the Indian experience set out to do.

Dr.Venkatanarayanan in his chapter titled *Constitutional Identity vs. Cultural Identity: Emerging Citizenship Debates in India* traces the multicultural values historically and further tries to understand the contemporary period within the constitutional framework. This chapter traces the conflict between the cultural nationalist and political nationalist, which is very relevant for us to understand the contemporary contentious laws related to citizenship in India. The chapter traces the contradiction between the multicultural society and mono-cultural political emphasis in contemporary period, which is depriving the resources and opportunities for minorities.

Challenges to Multiculturalism in India's Context by Madhumati Deshpande reiterates the point made in the paragraph above i.e. the Indian Constitution and administration embraced multicultural practices even before multiculturalism became a popular ideology in academic and international circles. Known to be a land of diverse religions, languages, cultures and traditions, the sovereign state of India was birthed amidst this diversity with the sole unifying theme being independence from the British. The nation in the case of India existed before the state and was continuously reinforced through the creation and assimilation of identities. The Indian Constitution and its provisions therefore had an organic affinity to diversity and the outcomes were demonstrated through inculcating values and provisions like secularism, reservations, cultural and educational rights, the often turbulent official recognition of linguistic diversity, autonomous regions and the National Integration Council, to name a few. After enumerating the key characteristics of multiculturalism, Deshpande proceeds to demonstrate how the 'challenges' to multiculturalism in India are distinct from the European experience i.e. while the Europeans were mostly homogenous entities that confronted diversity due to the forces of globalisation and migration, India, essentially a heterogeneous nation faces homogeneity. She maintains that scholars have argued that multiculturalism is unable to address the 'deep diversity' in India and other regions of Asia and Africa, preferring a pluralistic approach to managing diversity. The article summarizes some key challenges to managing cultural diversity in India i.e. the linguistic reorganization of states that recognised language as a way to carve out states within the Indian federation; internal migration and the hostility outsiders face with respect to local language speakers, problems of sign boards, voters lists etc in border states. Add to this, the provisions for autonomous regions to tribal groups that encourage an ethnic influence upon our federal system. The caste system, economic disparities based on regional, religious and caste lines and the weakening of toleration, in particular to do with religious diversity, has meant that India is moving towards a more homogenizing identity to seek out the unity that is increasingly questioned by diversity.

Ardra N.G. engages deeply with the phenomenon of language and language diversity in India in the chapter titled, *The Language Question: Politics, Policy and*

Possibility of Multilingualism in India. As the title suggests, the key is to explore the possibility of multilingualism in India and the essay examines some such state policies. Ardra maps the importance of language in theory, drawing from Habermas, Bourdieu, UR Ananthamurthy and Kymlicka positing language as a medium of mediation and reconciliation, a means to rational and non-violent negotiations and the core idea that speech is what sets humans apart, making language rights central to the paradigm of ethno-cultural rights. For Bourdieu, language is embedded in social and political contexts and should not be viewed as a standalone when looking at language policy and education. Ananthamurthy would argue on grounds of syncretism, which is amalgamation of various cultures and Bhakti movement, which challenged the dominant narratives, and assert that the demise of multilingualism in colonial India was due to standardisation and homogenisation undertaken by the imperial apparatus. The chapter seeks to focus on three distinct aspects of the language question in India i.e. language as a unifying factor in post-colonial partitioned India, language as a distinct and coherent identity strong enough to be the basis of federal reorganisation of states and the complex relationship between education and language i.e. the medium of instruction.

Malavika Menon's *Multiculturalism Institutionalised: Perspectives on Article 30 of the Indian Constitution* examines in particular the accommodation of the Indian state vis-à-vis minority education through the constitutionally recognised fundamental right of Article 30. This provision gives the right to religious and linguistic minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. This was an explicit recognition by the nascent Indian state of the cultural minorities in India – and much like multicultural theorists like Kymlicka and Parekh argue – of a liberal state embracing plurality and diversity. After a discussion on the theoretical framework offered by multiculturalism, Menon walks us through some key arguments debated in the Constituent Assembly. These debates that touched heavily upon religion were discussed largely within the framework of secularism than multiculturalism; hence positions on cultural and religious rights looked at the religious vs. secular dimension in the field of education with an obvious resistance to the former. The essay proceeds to demonstrate the tensions, contradictions and predilections in the debates in the Constituent Assembly in India and in the Supreme Court thereafter. The select court cases examined highlight the problems in recognizing and negotiating diversity. It looks at questions of assimilation v. autonomy in the field of education albeit through the 'establishment and maintenance of educational institutions of their choice'. While this appears as a straightforward provision, the Courts have been presented with petitions from minority institutions since the time of independence that have addressed contentions and concerns ranging from state recognition, affiliation, autonomy, withdrawal of recognition, state interference in management and a host of other concerns that have led

the Courts to define and redefine the scope of Article 30. To draw from the conclusion, the essay has attempted to show how multiculturalism in India can be examined through the prism of the secular and how secularism guided the language and discourse on minority rights.

Conclusion: Multiculturalism in Contemporary Period

India and Europe, despite having different historical paths, today find themselves facing similar problems regarding the possibility of developing inclusive societies, capable of integrating diversity and difference in a context of democratic participation in common social and political life.

India had to face – well before the multicultural debate was consolidated in the West – the question of including cultural difference in the definition of national unity. How to implement a community united by principles of equality and cooperation starting from the multiplicity and richness of the historical and cultural experiences that characterize the Indian sub-continent. The central point of the multicultural comparison was the effort and need to build unity, solidarity and a sense of common belonging starting from the recognition and vitality of cultural differences. In many respects Europe has had to deal with an inverse problem: how to recognize the plurality and multiplicity of cultural differences starting from a deep-rooted idea of internal homogeneity which constituted the ideological and rhetorical basis of the formation of European nation states. A narrative of homogeneity and cultural purity which has favoured both internal cohesion and competitive distinction with other European states, but which is unmasked in its claim to naturalness by migratory phenomena and globalization processes.

Both India and Europe found themselves having to develop effective concepts and policies to foster societies capable of living not only *with* difference but, above all, *in* difference.

Although the problem of how to coexist in a democratic way while respecting mutual differences is central in both contexts – and in reality is a central problem for any perspective of an open and democratic society – the idea of a multicultural society is increasingly subjected to criticism from a return to the scene of rhetoric that places in the foreground the themes of national unity and cohesion, respect for the rules and the exaltation of a presumed historical-cultural purity to be preserved from the threats of contamination and colonization by aggressive minorities. The current debate seems more oriented towards deconstructing an imaginary multiculturalism, understood as a rigid protection of the cultural differences of minority groups to the detriment of the survival of the cultural homogeneity of the dominant group, rather than addressing the difficult question of an effective recognition of cultural differences within a shared vision of common destiny and political unity.

However, despite the populist tendencies and identity closures, more than a generic and unappealable "death of multiculturalism", the current debate seems to decree the unsustainability of multicultural societies that solve the problem of recognizing differences supporting either their isolation or mutual struggle. In fact, the central question posed by the multicultural debate does not seem to be "the defence of cultural differences", but rather a public reflection on the power of defining the rules of common coexistence and on the effects that decisions taken in this field can have on the most vulnerable individuals and groups. Thinking about possible multicultural societies does not mean trying to escape change, withdrawing into the protection of the status quo or in a nostalgic attempt to restore presumed homogeneous communities of the past. Rather, it means dealing with the complexity and variability of the present, in awareness of the socially constructed nature of the categories we use to define who is the same and different, native and foreign, citizen and alien, and, therefore, taking responsibility for the effects in our lives and in those of others of these constructions. More than defending differences, the multicultural debate raises the question of how to imagine a more equal society, without pursuing the myth – which has proved tragic many times in history – of a "pure", homogeneous community, free from variability, complexity and change.

The present debate with regard to multiculturalism has to be located within the larger neoliberal framework, where the withdrawal of state has led to more cultural conflict as every group is fighting for their survival. The welfare state model in India and Europe has strengthened the multicultural framework, but this has come under threat after the implementation of neoliberal policies. Neoliberalism is considered as 'Total Ideology', where is wants the individual and social relations based on entrepreneur values. Market based entrepreneurs have to take risk and also personal responsibility for the success and failure without depending on the state. This has opened the struggle for resources and opportunities among different cultural groups. In Indian context, the increase in the religious, caste based and other ethnicity-based conflicts can be understood from this framework. There is a perceptible increase in this conflict after adoption of neoliberalism in India.

The European experience is comparatively different and the recent migration towards European countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America has a historical context where many of the European countries were involved in these countries as colonisers. The perpetual conflict between many cultural groups within these countries, that are majorly funded by the western countries, has obstructed the development process. This is resulting in huge migration towards developed countries in search of better life and opportunities. The present neoliberal regimes in European countries were not able to manage the impact of this migration as already the state is withdrawing from many welfare initiatives in these countries.

Starting from profoundly different historical contexts and experiences, Europe and India are committed to finding solutions to living together in difference. The comparison between the different ways in which, in the two contexts, India and Europe have tried to imagine and implement forms of coexistence in the public space that recognize commonality and solidarity, and, at the same time, respect difference is certainly a source of interesting questions and suggestions on how it is possible to think and implement a multicultural society. The contributions presented in the text do not intend to represent a unitary nor, even less, exhaustive framework of multicultural issues in India and Europe. They intend to contribute, through a critical review of the theoretical debate in the two contexts and concrete examples of policy implementation, to illuminate different aspects of the current multicultural debate. The contributors have different disciplinary expertise and research interests: anthropology, sociology, political science and international studies. The multidisciplinary perspective is another important contribution of the volume. It shows how multicultural issues require rich and articulated theoretical tools to manage the richness and complexity of living together in difference. As a whole, the volume intends to contribute to broadening the scope of critical engagement on multicultural issues in Europe and India, which can help us to strengthen cultural diversity for a better future of a peaceful society that welcomes diverse populations.

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