

**Multiculturalism in Indian Writings in English****Mr. Mangesh Digambar Panchal,**Research Scholar in English Language and Literature,  
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S. R. T. M. University, Nanded.**Abstract:**

*Multiculturalism in literature goes beyond ethnicity. It may include the various facets of sexuality and gender, cultural, and societal groups. Whether characters in the books we read reflect others or ourselves, what is most important is connecting with them in ways that help us understand who we are today. Sometimes learning about our history through the eyes of diverse characters can be unsettling or even painful, but it also can be an awakening to the unknown. In this respect, the present paper focus on the aspect of multiculturalism and how it reflects multiple cultures in the literary texts, sometimes subtle, other times more direct. Being a researcher in English literature, I strongly believe that the philosophy of multiculturalism reflects the mosaic beauty of the inner and outer world of the society and the nation perhaps. MLA eighth edition has been used to cite references and citations.*

*Keywords: multiculturalism, melting pot, salad bowl, homogeneous culture, cultural diversity, etc.*

In sociology and literature, multiculturalism describes how a given society deals with cultural diversity. Based on the underlying assumption that members of often very different cultures can coexist peacefully, multiculturalism expresses the view that society is enriched by preserving, respecting, and even encouraging cultural diversity. In the area of political philosophy, multiculturalism refers to how societies choose to formulate and implement official policies dealing with the equitable treatment of different cultures. It takes place on a nationwide scale or within a nation's communities. It may occur either naturally through immigration, or artificially when jurisdictions of different cultures are combined through legislative decree, as in the case of French and English Canada.

**Theories of Multiculturalism:**

India is the best example of a multicultural society where people speak 122 major languages and 1599 other languages. The Indian society has been multi-cultural, multireligious, and multi-linguistic. Indian culture is different from that of other countries, i.e. America, Canada, Australia. Within India, culture changes from state to state, region to region, religion to religion. Present novels compare Multicultural aspects not only within India but also those of India with other countries. Some migrant Indian writers in other places like America, Canada

develop their way of writing which consists of multicultural elements cultural conflict, recognition, mutual concern, peaceful co-existence, etc. They depict their cultural experiences in their novels. But each writer has a different experience regarding it.

Multiculturalism in India is too often ignored as a significant factor in the proliferating work in cultural studies or as part of socially progressive critical theory. As an official policy Multiculturalism succeeds to create social-cultural harmony, mutual tolerance, and respect among different cultures. The present study intends to compare and contrast such kinds of experiences and notions of writers with the help of select Indian English novels.

The chief proponents of multiculturalism believe that people should retain at least some features of their traditional cultures. Opponents say that multiculturalism threatens the social order by diminishing the identity and influence of the predominant culture. While acknowledging that it is a socio-political issue, this article will focus on the sociological aspects of multiculturalism. The two primary theories or models of multiculturalism as how different cultures are integrated into a single society are best defined by the metaphors commonly used to describe them: the "melting pot" and the "salad bowl" theories.

**The Melting Pot Theory:**

The melting pot theory of multiculturalism assumes that various immigrant groups will tend to “melt together,” abandoning their cultures and eventually becoming fully assimilated into the predominant society. Typically used to describe the assimilation of immigrants into the United States, the melting pot theory is often illustrated by the metaphor of a foundry’s smelting pots in which the elements iron and carbon are melted together to create single, stronger metal steel. In 1782, French-American immigrant J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur wrote that in America, “individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world.”

The melting pot model has been criticized for reducing diversity, causing people to lose their traditions, and for having to be enforced through governmental policy. For example, the U.S. Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 forced the assimilation of nearly 350,000 Indigenous peoples into American society without any regard for the diversity of their heritages and lifestyles.

**The Salad Bowl Theory:**

A more liberal theory of multiculturalism than the melting pot, the salad bowl theory describes a heterogeneous society in which people coexist but retain at least some of the unique characteristics of their traditional culture. Like a salad’s ingredients, different cultures are brought together, but rather than coalescing into a single homogeneous culture, retain their distinct flavors. In the United States, New York City, with its many unique ethnic communities like “Little India,” “Little Odessa,” and “Chinatown” is considered an example of a salad bowl society.

The salad bowl theory asserts that people don’t need to give up their cultural heritage to be considered members of the dominant society. For example, African Americans do not need to stop observing Kwanzaa rather than Christmas to be considered “Americans.” On the negative side, the cultural differences encouraged by the salad bowl model can divide a society resulting in prejudice and discrimination. In addition, critics point to a 2007 study conducted by American political scientist Robert Putnam showing that

people living in salad bowl multicultural communities were less likely to vote or volunteer for community improvement projects.

**Characteristics of a Multicultural Society:**

Multicultural societies are characterized by people of different races, ethnicities, and nationalities living together in the same community. In multicultural communities, people retain, pass down, celebrate, and share their unique cultural ways of life, languages, art, traditions, and behaviors.

The characteristics of multiculturalism often spread into the community’s public schools, where curricula are crafted to introduce young people to the qualities and benefits of cultural diversity. Though sometimes criticized as a form of “political correctness,” educational systems in multicultural societies stress the histories and traditions of minorities in classrooms and textbooks. A study conducted by the Pew Research Centre found that the “post-millennial” generation of people ages six to twenty-one are the most diverse generation in Indian society.

Far from an exclusively Indian phenomenon, examples of multiculturalism are found worldwide. In India, for example, newspaper articles, and radio and television programs are commonly presented in all native languages of various states and regions. Indeed, India’s constitution promotes diversity by recognizing the right of individuals to retain multiple citizenships in a variety of states and regions.

**Why Diversity Is Important:**

Multiculturalism is the key to achieving a high degree of cultural diversity. Diversity occurs when people of different races, nationalities, religions, ethnicities, and philosophies come together to form a community. A truly diverse society recognizes and values the cultural differences in its people. Proponents of cultural diversity argue that it makes humanity stronger and may be vital to its long-term survival. In 2001, the General Conference of UNESCO took this position when it asserted in its Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity that “...cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature.” Today, entire countries, workplaces, and schools are increasingly made up of various cultural, racial, and ethnic groups. By recognizing and

learning about these various groups, communities build trust, respect, and understanding across all cultures.

### **Multiculturalism in Indian English Literature:**

Multicultural literature describes how people live in different parts of the world. In other words, we can learn about their culture and beliefs. It also presents an accurate representation of the culture it portrays and must be free from stereotypes, or beliefs about a particular group that is oversimplified or based upon generalizations. Through these accurate representations, we can build a clear understanding of the culture's heritage as it is portrayed in the text.

Speaking of multicultural context concerning Indian literature is different in some important ways from speaking of it in the context of other post-colonial works of literature in English. In India, there has been such a complex interrelationship between various social, linguistic, racial, and religious cultures, and these distinguishable subcultures are so numerous, that it is virtually impossible to fit them in a common formula of sociological linguistic or ethnic cultural structure. We should not compare simple multicultural contexts and complex multicultural contexts. It is rather to compare complex and confusingly complicated contexts. Such complications are inevitable in a society that speaks nearly 80 languages, writes its literature in nearly 20 different languages, and has a history of large-scale social migrations for every 3000 years. Indian literature in English is India's youngest literary tradition with a very short history of about a hundred years. Multiculturalism on the other hand is the oldest and the most durable feature of the Indian way of life.

The concept of multiculturalism was originated in the 1970s and was used in Canada for the first time to tackle the problem of immigrants. Multiculturalism is defined as the state of co-existence of diverse cultures. Culture includes racial, religious, linguistics etc. Multiculturalism is the phenomenon of multiple groups of cultures existing within one society, largely due to the arrival of immigrant communities. Their cultural identities are reflected in every aspect of life – worship, fellowship, leadership, religious education, social

justice, etc. As a result of international migration, multiculturalism has become the dominant theory in the last 20-30 years in some countries of western civilization. That's why multiculturalism became a prominent theme of some novels. Authors who had first-hand experience of both cultures presented their experiences through their books. It takes these familiar cultural markers of ethnic groups, clothing, cuisine, and music and treats them as authentic practices to be preserved by their members and safely consumed by others. Under the poster of multiculturalism, they are taught in school, performed in festivals, displayed in media and museums, and so on. Multiculturalism can restore cultural rights by emphasizing cultural equality and respect.

In recent years, the idea of multiculturalism has become a powerful and controversial influence in a variety of social and cultural territories. The present research paper proposes to analyze and compare the multicultural elements in the select Indian English novels. The phenomenon of multiculturalism is, by all means, an old one. However, its impact in the present times is larger and deeper. Being a social theory, it plays a vital role in literary studies. It brings together different themes such as cultural diversity, recognition, mutual concern, peaceful coexistence of many cultures and subcultures. Developments in the studies of globalization and interculturalism, already representing a wider study than the single-language nation-state approach, may be well suited to move away from the paradigm of the nation-state. It is so intimately bound up in many parts of the world with those practices and discourses which manage 'diversity'. Multiculturalism means different things in different contexts and in Canada, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom, the term is intertwined with questions of racialized differences that have so far not been given sufficient recognition in India.

Summing up:

Literature becomes great literature when it develops from a language that is rooted in the soil that grows organically from people's experiences piled together for generations. The English language was grafted onto India's linguistic banyan tree. It has been a successful grafting only to a limited extent,

for the language has still not taken firm root in the soil. As a result, the literature produced in it has to operate within a severely limited social space. Hence, Multiculturalism has not been a sufficiently fruitful context for its survival and growth. Having outlined the specific cultural pressures on Indian English literature, it is necessary, however, to state that the role that it can play lies within the marga tradition, as national literature of India rather than as regional literature of any desi-tradition. Whether we like it or not the fact remains that at the moment it is the only national literature in India. And for depicting the marga side of modern Indian life it is the only vehicle. Its growth will depend on its realization of this role, on its quickness to rid itself of its multicultural context.

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