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Nov 5, 2014 - Vishalache Balakrishnan, PhD. – Malaysia. With regard to Professor's Tariq Modood (TM) presentation at the AME Conference in Montreal, ...

Some responses to Tariq Modood's Kohlberg Memorial Lecture at the 2013 AME conference, Montreal, from different regions around the world.

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The following is a brief summary of the main points of Modood's Kohlberg Memorial Lecture (prepared by Larry Blum):

Western European nations, and Francophone Canada, have retreated from using "multiculturalism" as a term referring to a positive phenomenon. The term has become stigmatized.

TM still defends multiculturalism, which he defines as aiming at the integration of immigrant and immigrant-origin minorities into societies and polities with a dominant, numerical majority ethnocultural group. This integration requires change and mutual adjustment on the part of the majority community and the minority communities.

TM recognizes that "interculturalism" is regarded as an acceptable term that has come to replace "multiculturalism" especially in Europe and Canada. He did not speak about the differences between interculturalism and multiculturalism, except to note briefly that he thought the Quebec version had a stronger emphasis on the normative primacy of French Canadian culture in Quebec as providing a framework for (multiculturalist) integration of minorities. His talk did not speak to the issue of "interculturalism," and he recognized this. (TM's views on this issue can be found in Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood, "How Does Interculturalism Contrast with Multiculturalism," *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 33:2, 175-196.)

Referring to the prominent Canadian multicultural theorist Will Kymlicka, TM agrees with Kymlicka that issues of "integration" are different for immigrant groups and for indigenous peoples. While Kymlicka discusses these differences, TM's notion of multiculturalism does not take on indigeneity issues and he does not discuss them in his writing on multiculturalism, nor in his KML. But, to repeat, he does not think that his model works for indigenous peoples.

TM thinks that despite the semantic retreat from "multiculturalism" in Europe and Canada, in practice the nations in question have largely adopted multiculturalist policies.

TM (himself a somewhat secular Muslim) is particularly concerned about Muslim integration in Europe, and recognizes that the retreat from multiculturalism is largely, though not entirely, due to majority concerns about Muslim minorities. TM thinks that multiculturalism should expressly embrace religious accommodation and diversity, thus abandoning a strict public secularism (such as is expressed in the French idea of *laïcité*).

Responses

Vishalache Balakrishnan, PhD. – Malaysia

With regard to Professor's Tariq Modood (TM) presentation at the AME Conference in Montreal, Canada, I would like to bring up several issues. Using my own country, Malaysia, as an example I would further elaborate my points. Malaysia is made up of several ethnic groups such as Malays, Indians, Chinese, Punjabis and other minority ethnics within the *Orang Asli* (natives living in West Malaysia) and *Pribumis* (natives living in Sabah and Sarawak which is considered as East Malaysia). Islam is the official state religion but the Federal Constitution allows for freedom of religion among all ethnic groups except for the Malays who are the main Muslim followers.

Based on Modood's explanation, all members of society in a nation have the right to practice what is preached in their religion. He calls for all members of a nation to be protected and given the right to have a voice. There's always the need for tolerance of the minority groups and the majority ethnic groups are also divided themselves due to two great reasons that many scholars clearly mention; politics and religion. In my country, there are cries of injustice by many minority religious groups as they find more and more rules and regulations which are not in accordance to certain issues that Prophet Muhammad himself have spoken about. For example, Prophet Muhammad's concern to draw the attention of his followers and Muslim rulers that non-Islamic religious institutions must not be harmed is revealed in his letters to the religious leaders of Saint Catherine in Mount Sinai who had sought protection of the Muslims. Rules such as anyone who marries a Muslim must become a Muslim also are not in line with what Prophet Muhammad preached. This is evident in his letter which stated "If a female Christian married a Muslim, it is not to take place without her approval. She is not to be prevented from visiting her church to pray. Their churches are declared to be protected".

I think every nation is unique where ethnicity is concerned. But the whole issues of living together in harmony are always structured by the ruling government of the day (politics) and the individuals and authority who sanction different faiths and beliefs (religion). If these two issues are dialoged in open with full integrity and transparency then more multicultural issues can be resolved in creative ways.

When Modood calls for more open mindedness for Muslim integration in Europe, I could feel for the need for more open dialogues and concepts like "Global Ethics" which was brought about by scholar and theologian, Hans Küng. But what about nations where the minorities are taken for granted? For example, in countries where a certain religion is the majorities' religion, other religions have to form councils and struggle to be heard, as in my own country. It is a very complex scenario as the Federal Constitution allows for freedom of religion but there are rules and regulations set up by the *Syariah* courts and Islamic bodies which contradict in many issues. Even uses of certain words are forbidden by the minority religions. For example the word "Allah" which means God in Arabic is forbidden to be used

by anyone who is not a Muslim in Malaysia. But “Allah” has been used for centuries by Sikh devotees and Christian who worship using Malay language. Again it is the complex play of politics and religion which needs to be dialogued and all individuals need to have a right according to the social morality of each nation.

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On October 2010 the Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel declares multiculturalism as a failed integration and immigration policy. Most German-Speaking scholars of this field should actually be very happy after the Chancellor’s statement. Since the mid-90s they have talked about the necessity to replace the “multicultural” model of immigrants’ integration with the “intercultural” one and understand integration as a constant duty of both immigrants and natives. (Schlevogt, 2004). Unfortunately, Angela Merkel didn’t mean the transition from Multiculturalism to Interculturalism, but announced a more severe policy which demands from the immigrants and only from them more efforts (e.g. language learning) in order to integrate themselves to the host society.

This debate may be not understandable in North and South America. Myself, I was first very surprised and confused when I heard during conferences my American colleagues “still” using the word multiculturalism. That’s why I would like to explain here how multiculturalism and Interculturalism are understood and used in German-Speaking (Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein, Switzerland) and some other countries in Europe like Greece.

But before this, let me mention some differences between traditional immigrant receiving countries, like Canada, USA, Australia, and the European receiving countries that Charles Taylor (2013) also summarized in his paper Interculturalism or Multiculturalism? and may make the different sense of multiculturalism in Europe and in America more clear:

1. German-speaking immigrant-receiving countries have less experience with the phenomenon of immigration. Furthermore, till the 80s immigrants (Gastarbeiter) were expected to return to their country of origin after completing some working years in the receiving countries.
2. German-speaking immigrant receiving countries still have a strong national identity based on a common history, Christianity and –except for Switzerland- a common language.
3. These countries don’t deal with ethnic minorities or racial groups who enjoy full citizenship but mainly with people with different nationalities and citizenships. Even if citizenship laws in German-speaking countries have undergone big changes in the last decades, citizenship is still based primarily on the principle of “[jus sanguinis](#)”. This means that, unlike in the United States, German-speaking countries do not grant children citizenship for being born on their soil.
4. They mainly don’t deal with “mobile people” with high level of education and skills, but with less qualified persons who occupy low-class-jobs.

Under these circumstances, multiculturalism in German-speaking countries is seen as a rigid concept which recognizes cultural differences and minorities’ or immigrants’ rights, but doesn’t include the interaction between cultures which can lead to new cultures and people

with multiple identities, not only based on ethnic origin or religion (Hamburger, 2009; Nieke, 2000). Multiculturalism is seen as inducing segregation and parallel societies – sometimes also in the sense of ghetto – and is even considered dangerous since the fight of ethnic, racial and cultural groups for their rights and self-realization can prompt a new racism (Taylor, 2013, Radtke, 1994). Radtke (1994) sees multiculturalism as a compromise between the need to receive migrant laborers on the one hand and maintain homogeneity at the other. He also criticizes that though multiculturalism includes representatives of all groups in power positions, it doesn't change social structures or guarantee equal opportunities. It limits itself to practical questions like bilingualism, curricula revision etc. that don't solve the more complex problem of integration.

The replacement of the prefix multi with inter created the word interculturalism. The new prefix wants to emphasize the dialogue and interaction between two or more cultures. Interculturalism is based on a dynamic understanding of culture and considers integration as a process where both sides give, take and by the end change due to this process (Portera, 2011). The main aim of interculturalism is not a simple coexistence of different ethnic, racial or cultural groups, but the consideration of the other (Auernheimer, 1996). This consideration and interaction leads to mutual learning from one another and therefore to a great benefit for immigrant-receiving countries (Markou, 1997). Immigration is like this—not a risk for the host society and its native people but enrichment, an occasion to develop new ideas, rules, values and attitudes and to reflect about norms and behaviors (Portera, 2011). Interculturalism regards all life sectors and especially education.

In his lecture Tariq Modood defended the integration concept of multiculturalism without really referring to the “European” interculturalism and the differences between old and new immigrant-receiving countries. I missed these points in his otherwise very interesting presentation.

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In his Kohlberg Memorial Lecture at the 2013 AME conference, Tariq Modood defends multiculturalism. He understands it as a process of integration of immigrant and immigrant-origin minorities into societies and polities with a dominant, numerical majority ethno-cultural group.

This idea may be coherent for European societies receiving a large number of foreign immigrants (although even for them I find it challenging), but it is undoubtedly problematic for diverse societies with significant indigenous populations such as South Americans, which still go through different social and political processes for the acknowledgment of ethnic and cultural native minorities. This means not only acknowledging these groups' existence, as individuals and communities, but giving them full rights, appropriate educational and health services and political participation. In fact, South America is an extremely diverse region of the world. It has one of the highest indigenous population and account for a great part of the enormous sociolinguistic and cultural richness of the Latin-American region. For instance, Ethnologue (Lewis, Simons & Fennig, 2013) lists 1,060 living languages for the Americas; out of them 458 belong to South America. It is important to note that indigenous population were the main victim of crimes against humanity in those countries that have had internal wars and political conflicts. In Peru, the Commission of Truth and Reconciliation (CVR, 2004) showed that 75 per cent of the victims of violence were indigenous people, although the indigenous population in Peru accounts for no more than 30 per cent of the population as a whole. This is also true for other countries such as, for instance, Guatemala.

When concepts such as “inclusion” of these traditional marginalized groups into mainstream society, or notions of “development” and “modernization” of their ways of living are made explicit in political discourse, they usually refer to a process of assimilation of these groups into the ways of life, economical trends and values of the hegemonic culture. In this sense, native cultures are usually stigmatized for not being “modern” or for being against development, for instance, when indigenous communities make demonstrations against mining or oil companies that occupy their traditional lands, pollute their territories and natural resources and change their traditional way of life. In many countries, even Intercultural Bilingual Education efforts, aimed at building citizenship and fulfilling the rights and welfare of indigenous people, may be a mechanism of the hegemonic order that subordinate indigenous cultures to the mainstream, as when education goals and practices do not respect indigenous people's characteristics and expectations or think of native languages only as the first step towards the learning of the dominant language (Spanish).

We agree with Tariq Modood when he says that issues of “integration” are different for immigrant groups and for indigenous peoples. It is precisely because of this that we think his concept of multiculturalism, focused as it is on immigrant groups, would be inappropriate and even dangerous if, contrary to his intentions, it were applied to societies like South Americans, in which issues regarding indigeneity are salient. With many of its aboriginal

cultures in danger of disappearing due to diverse menaces that act against the survival of peoples and cultures, it is extremely important to acknowledge indigenous rights, that is, those rights that exist because of the specific condition of the indigenous peoples. Indigenous rights include not only basic human rights but also those rights dealing with the preservation of their language, religious beliefs and ancestral territory. These elements of cultural heritage are a fundamental piece of their existence as a people. In fact, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN, 2007) acknowledges these rights. Modood's talk neglects these issues and explicitly points out that issues of "integration" are different for immigrant groups and for indigenous peoples. However, how different are they and in what way these differences should inform public policies are topics he does not address and that remain still unsolved in his talk.

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