**The idea of multiculturalism- success or failure?**

Multiculturalism is an abstract concept which describes the coexistence of different cultural groups in a society. However, based on how it is perceived by individuals, multiculturalism can hold various meanings depending on their position in such a society. It has a great impact on the formation of people’s cultural identity, such that those exposed to it may experience a change in their cultural roots. This change may lead to an improvement or deterioration of the cultural community to which the person belongs to. Through this essay, I would like to highlight how multiculturalism can benefit a society as well as show the negative ways in which it can affect the society.

Since the 15th century, immigration to other countries has been a common act with various motives such as seeking employment, improving financial status etc. Immigration can be considered as the main cause of multiculturalism, as immigrants bring their own culture to the respective community. Over the passage of time, it can be observed that the immigrant community has integrated certain parts of the native culture into their own by the process of acculturation creating a possibly better cultural identity for themselves. It can also be noted that the native community also incorporates certain aspects of the immigrant community, thereby creating an environment of co-learning from each other. Such an environment has proven effective in creating harmonious relationships between communities as they share certain aspects of each other's culture. This also raises awareness of various aspects of the community that require change to correct ethically incorrect practices or to avoid situations related to those aspects. A successful example of multiculturalism is the Australian community, where there is a great diversity of cultures - both indigenous and immigrant. This cultural diversity is widely accepted and welcomed by the majority of the Australians, which has had a positive impact on the country's development. The presence of a diverse workforce has helped to expand businesses overseas and increase the country's gross domestic product (GDP) thanks to the capabilities of each cultural community. The increasing number of immigrants in Australia has also led to development in higher education, as the various thoughts and ideas of different cultures are represented, giving greater recognition to these communities. Another notable feature of the Australian society is that a variety of over 200 languages are spoken in the community. Apart from English, which is the most commonly spoken language, there is a variety of indigenous languages in common use alongside the languages of the immigrants. It is noted that on average, a person living in Australia speaks an average of 2 languages - their mother tongue and English. Hence, diversity in multiculturalism gives rise to innovative ideas and unconventional perspectives to address the problems.

The changes in a society that occur as a result of multiculturalism include the elimination of prejudices and stereotypes that cloud people's judgement towards discriminated communities. The knowledge gained through multiculturalism plays a fundamental role in shaping the reputation and ethnic identity of members of a particular culture, influencing their self-perception regarding their cultural roots. Another factor that contributes to the unification of this cross-cultural phenomenon is the sense of commonality that arises when there are shared customs or characteristics between cultural groups. It reduces the tensions caused by the characteristics of communities that are foreign to each other and also creates equal opportunities for all. While the points discussed cover the benefits of multiculturalism, there is also an ignored side of multiculturalism where cross cultures do more harm than good. The same diversity which creates an ideal society can cause further division within the community and gives rise to conflict. Sometimes the cultural differences between communities can clash and create a rift which adds to the already existing tensions due to unfamiliarity. These differences often lead to unfair treatment of others and also cause lack of communication to increase, making life in a multicultural society more difficult. The diversity of language makes the task more complicated as the interpretation of what is said can vary depending on the language. difference in lifestyles also contribute to the disadvantage, as what is considered pleasant in one culture may be considered offensive in another. For example, Western cultures are more open and friendly in comparison with Eastern cultures, where communities are more reserved and stricter. Such small differences have a big impact on different environments. A good example of this difference is the workplace orientation observed in different parts of the world. Workplaces in the West are more individually oriented compared to those in the East. The goals pursued by workers and the benefits received also differ. When 2 contrasting work environments meet, the lack of alignment of values and beliefs has a negative impact on productivity. Another important point is that living conditions in any society play a role in how an individual perceives his or her environment. This indirectly affects how different cultures view each other. One of the most important consequences of multiculturalism is the assimilation of cultures. The dominant culture, which in most cases is the native culture of the region, dissolves the smaller cultures into itself. It can be assumed that the lack of representation of minorities and the pressure to follow the common norm are the main causes of assimilation. The desire to fit into the dominant culture of the society leads to the destruction of their cultural identities, which ties them to their culture of origin. Multiculturalism can result in lose of freedom which is born out of favouritism towards certain cultures. The immigrant population gets exploited under the guise of acquiring equal opportunities and status by political leaders and other powerful individuals which can result in resentment and hatred towards the other cultures and violence. Development of such detrimental thoughts and emotions generates a desire to establish social dominance within the community. The native population residing in the community views such power struggle as a threat to their existence and on that account isolates themselves by avoiding contact with the immigrant communities. A clear example of the above discussed scenarios is the poor hospitality towards immigrants in Kuwait. Kuwait's society is divided into 2 communities - the expatriates and the Kuwaitis. The Kuwaiti population has become a minority as the number of immigrants, especially Indians, coming to Kuwait in search of work has greatly increased. Although both cultures are strongly represented by their respective nationalities in Kuwait, the concept of multiculturalism has not succeeded in creating a unified community. There is a certain hierarchy existing amongst the residents in terms of jobs and rights. The immigrant population cannot move up or reach higher positions in the work sectors, as higher positions are reserved only for Kuwaitis. The benefits and wages they receive from the government also do not favour immigrants. It is difficult to establish contacts between cultures because of the different languages spoken by each community. The majority of immigrants can speak English reasonably fluently, which helps them communicate within the expat community, while the main language of the Kuwaiti community is Arabic and only a very small percentage can speak English. For these reasons, there is very little social interaction between the local and immigrant populations. Multiculturalism has thus not served Kuwait well, creating a society that vacillates between harmonious coexistence and hostility.

With the growth of globalization around the world, the notion of a welcoming society is much preferred to a reserved society. Thus, multiculturalism, despite its intrusive effect on different cultures, may prove more useful in shaping international relations. The knowledge procured about the diversity of customs could shape new mixed cultures that can uphold the traditions of coexisting cultures and thus bring about a peaceful agreement for the benefit of all.