
UNIT 11 ETHNIC AND RACIAL ISSUES AND MULTICULTURALISM IN CANADA

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11.1 INTRODUCTION

Canadian society is an ethno-racially complex composition of aboriginal peoples, colonising groups, immigrants, and refugees each with diverse beliefs, customs, values, languages and other cultural expressions. Describing Canada as a multicultural society means that Canadian society is composed of multiple, distinct and different cultural and ethnic groups. Multiculturalism is both a matter of fact and a manner of public policy in Canada. It is the first immigrant country to adopt the policy of multiculturalism as a guiding political philosophy in an ethnically diverse population. Both the federal and provincial governments (except Quebec) have since accepted in principle that Canadian society is multicultural rather than bicultural. Government policies are said to emphasise cultural 'unity and diversity'. This Unit deals with the ethnic and race relations in Canada and the policy of multiculturalism devised by the government to bring unity, harmony and integration among the various ethnic groups and races.

11.2 ETHNIC AND RACIAL PROFILE OF CANADA

Ever since Canada came into being, immigrants have settled on this land. This was started by the natives, and later by the Europeans. In the years to come, Canada received immigrants from all over the world especially Asia. Since the time of confederation when 91% of Canada's population was of French or British origin, there has been a constant change in the ethnic composition of the country. In the 1991 census, 39% were British, 24 % French, and 37 % other than British and French Origin. The other category includes the people of Eastern Europe, Southern Europe and East and South Asia. The plural society came about largely on its own without any help from public policy programme in spite of the implicit policy of Anglo conformity or assimilation to British culture. In Canada, the last census listed 113 ethnicities in its population. The largest ethnic origins are as follows: English,

French, Scottish, Irish German, aboriginals, Italian, Ukrainian, Chinese, Dutch, Polish and South Asians such as Pakistanis, Indians and Bangladeshis. Ethnic groups can be further classified as **visible minorities** which are defined in the Equity Act as 'persons other than aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour' and 'invisible minorities' – mostly those with European origin. Public policies such as multiculturalism apply to both groups while employment equity applies only to visible minorities.

11.2.1 Ethnic and Racial Groups

It will not be out of place to clarify here as to what is meant by an ethnic group and a race and what is the difference between the two. An ethnic group is an involuntary community or group of persons who share the same distinct culture or who are descendants of those who have shared a distinct culture and who identify with their ancestors or their culture or group. It embraces such groups as the aborigines of Canada, the French in France, Germans in Germany. On the other hand, race is a category of physical characteristics possessed by people. Unlike culture, these characteristics are not possessed in common. They are possessed individually. Each race is seen as possessing distinct traits such as skin, colour, eye colour, nose shape, hair type, lip shape, cheekbones, body hair etc. In this context usually nine geographical races are named, prominent among them are the European, African, Indian, Asian, Australian, Amerindian etc. Racial categorisation has usually carried the assumption of superiority of one race over another (e.g. white race is superior to the black race). This implies ideology of racism. The Canadian population consists of various ethnic groups as well as races. Among the old ethnic groups in Canada, one can include the British, French, Germans, Dutch, Ukrainians, Russian, Polish, Jewish, native Indians and Inuit, Blacks, Chinese, Japanese and others. Among the relatively young groups one can include the Greeks, Portuguese, various Latin Groups, East Indians and others. The existence of ethnic diversity and races raise two basic questions: i) what place do ethnic groups have and how do they relate to each other in a society made up of diverse ethnicities? and ii) how do the diverse groups incorporate into the larger society and how does the larger society become integrated into a nation-state? Canada has tried to bring about this integration through a policy of multiculturalism.

Before we discuss the problems relating to ethnicity and race relations, another clarification is necessary in the context of Canada. Multiculturalism covers different forms of cultural pluralism each of which raises its own challenges. According to Will-Kymlicka, cultural diversity arises from the incorporation of previously self-governing territorially concentrated cultures into a larger state. These incorporated cultures wish to maintain themselves as distinct societies alongside the majority culture and demand various forms of autonomy in order to preserve their distinct status. Apart from this, there are other groups of immigrants, which are called 'ethnic groups'. Their aim is to integrate into the larger society and be accepted as full members of it. Their aim is to get recognition for their ethnic identity and **not** to become a separate self-governing nation along with the larger society. Canada's historical development has involved the federation of three distinct national groups (English, French and Aboriginals). The original incorporation of the Quebecois and Aboriginal communities into the Canadian political community was involuntary. While the Francophone have been demanding separation from Canada, the aboriginals have also been demanding the inherent right of self-government. The second source of cultural pluralism is immigration. Though they are not 'nation' and do not occupy homelands,

their distinctiveness is manifested primarily in their family lives and in voluntary associations and is not inconsistent with their institutional integration. They represent different ethnic groups seeking to protect their identity. Thus Canada is both a multinational and a polyethnic state. The original native **Indians** were overrun by the French settlers; the French were conquered by the English, although the **current** relationship between the two can be seen as a voluntary federation and both have accepted immigrants who are allowed to maintain their ethnic identity. In short, national minorities and immigration are the two sources of cultural diversity in Canada and multiculturalism was devised as a policy of supporting polyethnicity within the national **institutions** of the English and French cultures.

11.3 RACE RELATIONS BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The latter half of last century witnessed an emergence of interethnic conflicts and reassertion of ethnicity around the world and Canada is no exception. In many societies ethnic minority groups who previously appeared to have accommodated themselves to their minority position have become politicised and have begun to place demands on the larger society. For example, the day to day chronicle of Canada reported a number of ethnic conflicts in 1990s: the question of Quebec, the political movement among the Canadian aboriginal people, racial discrimination, the continuing stream of immigrations, the changing character of immigration, the bilingualism and multicultural policies of the government etc.

Right from the days of the confederation, **in spite** of the constitutional duality of the Canadian society, the pressures to conform to Anglo Saxon values can be easily traced to Non-French Canada. The overt and covert discrimination against the East European groups is well documented. The ideals of 'vertical mosaic' generally seem to have received lip service from the dominant Anglo Saxon groups. It was generally understood that Anglo conformity was the desired goal for East European immigrants if they were to attain social mobility. For example JTM Anderson, who later became the premier of the Saskatchewan province, asserted in 1918 that Canadian citizenship should be less freely granted because the people of foreign origin will never become true Canadian citizens involved with the highest Anglo Saxon ideals. The pressure to conform to the Anglo Saxon values was not only limited to culture but was also the essential condition for economic mobility.

The racist ideologies are often built into social policies. In the Canadian history, the most obvious policies guided by a racist ideology were immigration policies legislated at different periods of time. In 1902, British Columbia passed legislation to disfranchise the Asians. Anti-Asian riots took place in Vancouver in 1907. While the Chinese immigrations were discouraged by the passage of direct legislation as the passage of a head tax of 50\$ in 1904; East Indian immigrants were kept out through the continuous 'voyage' legislation. In a study conducted in 1915, a number of reasons were given for anti Asian attitude such as instinctive hostility towards the coloured race, the fear of new race problem, antipathy against possible race intermixture, political **impotence** of the East Indians in international **affairs**, and East Indian's own racial **peculiarities**. It was widely felt that though the Asians were able to do much of the rough work, they cannot be assimilated. Strong opposition to the Asian immigration continued into 1940s by major Canadian institutions. For example, Percy Bengough, speaking for the Traders and Labour of Canada in 1947 said that there is a need to select and exclude races that cannot properly be assimilated into the national life

of Canada. Similarly Prime Minister King justified the restrictive immigration into Canada in 1948 because large-scale immigration from the orient would change the fundamental composition of the Canadian population. Any considerable oriental immigration would give rise to social and economic problems of a character that might lead to serious difficulties in the international relations. Similarly, the Canadian government was also **reluctant** to admit **Jews** as **refugees** to Canada.

Again, the racial and ethnic prejudices were intertwined with the gender prejudices. For example, the Chinese women were generally seen as prostitutes or polygamous second wives, Ukrainian women as 'chid brides' 'domestic drudges', 'beast of burden' and 'victims of male abuse'. Similarly, Indian women were considered as traditional conservative and as having a low status in their culture. Their dresses, particularly the sari, was often disliked specially on the job. In fact, the issue of ethnic relations became more complicated with the arrival of the Asian immigrants in Canada before the Second World War because it was different from the Eastern European both in terms of racial antagonism as well as legal restrictions placed on their movement. They were outcast in the Canadian society both occupationally and socially. Continued efforts were made to deny rights of citizenship and permission to bring their immediate families to settle in Canada. Most people who belonged to visible minorities had to face racial animosity including abusive comments on a regular basis. In short, before the Second World War, while the European ethnic groups were expected to be assimilated into the Anglo-Saxon culture, the Asian immigrants were even denied this opportunity and it was believed that they could not be assimilated into the Canadian society. In most of the opposition to Asian immigration, the racism and intolerance of Western ethnic groups were never openly admitted but the superiority of the white Canadians was reinforced by labelling the Asian immigrants as unsuitable for the cultural and physical conditions of Canada. At a broader level, Canada had no policy of societal integration of different races and ethnic groups.

11.4 POST-SECOND WORLD WAR SCENARIO

After the war, there was a gradual liberalisation and a change in the policy of government in the ethnic and race relations in Canada. The first change was the repeal of the Chinese immigration Act 1933. Sponsorship categories for the Asians were extended. The regulations under the immigration act passed by the Pearson government in 1967 removed racial quotas and any other limitation to immigration based on race, colour or religion. The liberalisation of Canada's immigration policy reflected several important changes in political and economic structures, both in Canada and around the world. The changes in the immigration regulation recognised the political decolonisation of many Asian and African countries. But the primary reason for a major shift in the policy was the rising nationalistic sentiment in the Francophone community of Quebec. After the war, industrialisation brought about fundamental social and economic changes in Quebec, which produced a new intellectual class determined to modernise society and to reinvent its national identity. This was expressed in the Quiet Revolution. This Revolution created a self-awareness of a new national identity. This identity was based upon the control over destiny through the conjecture of the state and the nation. One began to speak no longer of the province but rather of the state, a state that could assert the power of the people of Quebec. The rising new elite wished in some way to transform Quebec into a complete society, capable of political self determination, and develop a new type of nationalism. The juridical, cultural

and defensive aspects of the traditional nationalism were replaced by the political nationalism; the national question became a question of political power, with political sovereignty for Quebec as the ultimate objective.

11.4.1 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism

To reconcile the claims of Quebec nationalism, the Government of Canada appointed a Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963. Before the commission could complete its work, it became evident that the problem of Canadian culture could not be adequately approached without also considering the presence of 'other ethnic groups in Canada' and the issue of cultural diversity rather than only the issue of the cultural duality of the Canadian society. By the end of 1960s, the demographic effects of the constant stream of immigration to Canada had become quite evident. Also there was an indigenous movement for the Aboriginal people's rights and Land Claims especially in the Western Canada where there were no treaties signed or where the desire to exploit natural resources on the lands belonging to indigenous communities had put treaties into questions.

The Royal Commission heard about more than just the English and French relations. Ethnic spokespersons everywhere argued that the old policy of assimilation was both unjust and unfair and overall a failure. The groups asserting their ethnic identity were the established European minority groups such as Ukrainians, Polish, Italians and others who were third generation' migrants. Their claims were that their identity and contribution to the Canadian society was not being recognised and that they were being denied the benefit of Canada's economic revival and their own hard work. They argued that although they were not of English and French origin, they were still every bit Canadians and they would not put up being excluded. They urged for a new model of citizen participation where all ethnic groups are considered as part of Canada. They even offered a blueprint for a Canadian identity based on the public acceptance of differences and support of cultural pluralism. Unlike the melting pot model of the US, they preferred the idea of 'cultural mosaic' unique parts fitting together into a unified whole.

Volume 4 of the Commission's report represented a change of approach of the Commission's work. It noted that it was not possible to emphasise language or cultural autonomy for the French while ignoring or insisting on assimilation of other groups. To the surprise of many, the Royal Commission agreed with the argument of the minority ethnic groups and it presented the government with the idea and recommendations which would acknowledge the value of cultural pluralism to the Canadian identity and encourage Canadian institutions to respect this pluralism in their policies and programmes. The policy was accepted by the Government of Canada in 1971 as a policy of multiculturalism within the bilingual framework. It affirmed English and French as the two official languages of Canada but simultaneously, ethnic pluralism was declared to be a positive feature of Canadian society that had to be preserved and developed.

Towards the end of 1970s, a new sector of society had begun to make demands on the multicultural programme. By this time, the ethnic composition of immigrants to Canada had changed substantially and unlike at any other period in the Canadian history. the single largest category of immigrants were coming from Asian countries. A concern developed among some sectors of public as to how quickly these new immigrants could be integrated into society. A national survey on immigration sponsored by the Canadian government in

1974 produced a Green Paper, which presented a number of options before the government. Similarly the survey conducted by the Directorate of Multiculturalism concluded that though there was a general tolerance among the Canadians towards continued immigrants, there were indications also of concern over it. Unemployment was seen as being related to immigration and any future decline in economic conditions could change the attitude of tolerance. It also feared that the increased number of non-white immigrants might evoke a racist movement among the white. It was argued that because of racism it was the people of non-white race rather than the established minorities who had the real problems in Canadian society such as poverty and unemployment. As a result the government concluded that the same general principle of multiculturalism of giving recognition to ethnic identities was to be applied to the new groups of immigrants. It became clear that many problems of immigrant adjustment stemmed from prejudice in Canada against the non white races. The issue came to be defined as the problem of 'visible minorities' and in the 1980s the administering body of multiculturalism policy directed its goals towards this group.

Multiculturalism was also set up as a national symbol for Canadians and fulfilled the need for a distinctive Canadian identity. The British cultural presence in Canada had weakened with the decline of the British empire after the Second World War and an increasing American presence led to the fears of loss of identity. Thus the goal of the policy of multiculturalism was to establish Canada as a unique nation, unlike any other and to differentiate Canadians from Americans. In describing one of the purposes of multiculturalism, Prime Minister Trudeau declared that 'we become less like others, we become less susceptible to cultural, social or political envelopment by others'. By adopting multiculturalism as part of their collective identity, a distinctive Canadian identity, which would serve as a source of pride, was also established.

11.5 POLICY OF MULTICULTURALISM

The policy of multiculturalism was introduced by the federal government of Canada in 1971. As expressed in the original statement, the policy was aimed at a greater integration of the Canadian society by providing the diverse ethnic minority groups with a sense of belonging to Canada. Its original aim was identity incorporation giving ethnic minority groups a public recognition of their identity. The policy gave them a chance to reinforce their identity but within the Canadian context and with the mainstream recognising their ethnic diversity as a part of the Canadian identity. The basic principle of this policy was enunciated by the Prime Minister of Canada in the Canadian Parliament on 8 October 1971 as *'a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework commends itself to the government as the most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of Canadians. Such a policy should help to break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies. Nationality unity if it is a means anything in the deeply personal sense must be founded on confidence in one's own individual identity, out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions. A vigorous policy of multiculturalism will help to create this initial confidence. It can form the basis of a society which is based on fair play'*.

At policy level, multiculturalism refers to a political framework which justifies and legitimises a 'variety of government initiatives towards managing ethno-racial diversity. During the Second World War, the cultural diversity policy promoted citizenship that was

first linked to patriotism and then to naturalisation. In the mid 1950s, policy shifted its focus to one of encouraging the maintenance of ethnic identities and communities and of encouraging positive integrative relations between ethnic groups. Despite the rhetoric of the promotion of integration, in practice, the emphasis of cultural diversity was that of assimilation. In 1970s, the goal of multiculturalism became that of ensuring that 'all individuals have equal opportunities to participate regardless of race or ethnic origin', that individuals and communities are assisted 'in the elimination of any barrier to their equitable participation in society and that institutions in Canada be both respectful and inclusive of Canada's multicultural character'.

The framework for multiculturalism in Canada has evolved with the passage of the Canadian Citizenship Act in 1947, the passage of the Canadian Bill of Rights in 1960, the adoption of official Languages Act in 1969, the enactment of the Multicultural Policy in 1971. The next stage was the creation of the Canadian Human Rights Commission by the Canadian government in 1978. Most provinces already had such bodies to deal with the complaints of discriminations in the private sector and to promote anti-discrimination educational programme but the new commission closed certain loopholes within federal jurisdiction. Another advance was the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the Constitution Act in 1982, which provided constitutional protection against discrimination by the federal and provincial governments in the equality rights clause. In 1986 the Employment Equity Act designated visible minorities, women, people with disabilities and Aboriginals as groups that could benefit from affirmative action programme with respect to hiring in the public service. The Act called for efforts of 'reasonable accommodation' and equal representation of minorities in hiring but it did not mandate any quota of minority that are to be hired. It relied on the voluntary participation of private companies in applying the Act. A number of provinces also brought forth their own equity legislation. While those not included complained about reverse discrimination, some ethnic leaders criticised the lack of specific goals and timetables in the legislation. Finally, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1988 gave multiculturalism a stronger legal base by consolidating the existing policies and practices into legislation, and provided more detailed policy statements on multiculturalism. The government created a new Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship in 1991.

11.5.1 Multiculturalism: The Objectives

At the policy level, multiculturalism had four objectives: i) assistance to cultural groups to support and promote cultural retention, ii) the overcoming of barriers to full participation in the Canadian society for members of cultural groups, iii) enhancement of national unity through the promotion of cultural exchange and interaction among Canadian cultural groups, and iv) assistance to members of cultural groups, particularly immigrants in learning at least one official language. In short, the policy was based on the premise that the support of the cultural identities of different ethnic groups within the Canadian society, accompanied by exchange and interaction among them, will facilitate the integration of society as a whole. To implement this policy, the government created a special agency, the Multicultural Directorate, which developed programmes in four categories. The *first* type of programmes included grants given to various ethnic institutions such as schools and cultural centres to develop their own museums, libraries and archives to develop courses in language training, the creation of ethnic art and the like. It also included grants to ethnic organisations such as youth associations and umbrella organisations for leadership training and organisational

activities. The **second** type of programme included grants given to sponsor ethnic dances, festivals, art exhibits and the like. These have been perhaps the most visible aspect of multiculturalism. With time, other programmes were sponsored such as ethnic and interethnic conferences, the establishment of multicultural centres in a number of cities, assistance to ethnic language teaching, immigration orientation and citizenship preparation programmes. The **third** type of programmes included anti-racism advertisement in the media, subways, billboards and films with the aim of projecting positive ideas of different racial groups. Several of these programmes tried to emphasise the economic value of cultural diversity to the general public. The **fourth** type of programme included the establishment of multi-thematic ethnic national institutions and the incorporation of selected ethnic institutions into the mainstream structure. Examples are the Canadian Ethnic Studies Association and the Canadian Heritage Languages Institute. To promote the study of Canadian diversity, the Canadian government established 30 ethnic chairs at various universities across Canada. A series of histories of various ethnic groups in Canada had been sponsored by the multicultural programmes and published by a major publishing company in Canada. A Multicultural Television channel was also set up in Toronto and many ethnic programmes regularly appeared on the Public Access Network across the country.

The Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1988 had the following features: i) it recognises that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage, ii) recognise and promote the understanding that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and provides an invaluable resource of shaping Canada's future, iii) promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to such participation, iv) recognise the existence of communities whose members share a common origin and their historic contribution to Canadian society and enhance their development, v) ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law while respecting and valuing their diversity, vi) encourage and assist the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of Canada to be respectful and inclusive of Canada's multicultural character, vii) promote the understanding and creativity that arise from the interaction between individuals and communities of different origin, viii) foster the recognition and appreciation of the diverse cultures of the Canadian society and promote the reflection and the evolving expressions of those cultures, ix) preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French without harming the official languages of Canada, x) advance multiculturalism in Canada in harmony with the national commitment to **official** languages of Canada.

11.5.2 Multiculturalism: The Ideology

As an ideology, multiculturalism encompasses a set of ideas and ideals in defence of valuing diversity. It is a description of the composition of Canada both historically and currently referring to the cultural and racial diversity of the Canadian society. It holds that the racial, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity is an integral, beneficial and **necessary** part of Canadian society and identity. Critically examining **multiculturalism**, Moddley contends that it is a complex process, which encompasses a range of notions of heritage, cultural diversity, recreation and entertainment activities, cultural centres and an entire way of

- life'. Multicultural ideology, expressed in the multicultural policy of Canada, emphasises the notion of managing diversity, promoting cultural heritage and promoting 'respect and appreciation for the multicultural reality of Canada'. This ideology is unique in the sense that it holds that racial cultural religious linguistic diversity is a source of enrichment and strength for nationality. It constitutes a distinctive feature of celebration of Canada as a people and distinguishes it from the 'melting pot' of USA. Culturally different members are encouraged to co-exist and relate positively to one another in the spirit of respect and accommodation.

From 1972 to 1990, government funding for multiculturalism programmes was granted to a variety of groups and voluntary organisations, particularly select key national organisations. Government funding for programmes reflected the societal fragmentation and separateness of ethnic groups and communities in the process of promoting ethnic identity. Citizenship programmes also emphasised particular notion of identity, participation in collective rights and equality in political discourse. The multiculturalism policies and practices associated with immigration, citizenship, language and human rights have helped establish a social justice infrastructure for the Canadian society. For example, the establishment of a Race Relations unit in 1981 to examine the state of race relations in major cities in Canada, a symposium on Race Relations and the Law in 1982, the establishment of a National Strategy on Race Relations in 1983, the establishment of civil committees in the Canadian municipalities mandated to improve race relations, the development of a municipal Race Relation Programme in 1986, the development and implementation of an employment equity programme in 1986, the adoption of race relations and multicultural education policies by school boards across Canada, numerous initiatives examining relations between police and minorities, the legislation of the multiculturalism Act in 1988, and the redress settlement for Japanese-Canadians in 1988. Multiculturalism has been an attempt to achieve confluence among immigration, citizenship, language and human rights policies.

The contents of multiculturalism have shifted over time. From an initial period of celebrating differences to ensure acceptance of new Canadians, multiculturalism in the 1980s focussed on institutional accommodation and removal of discriminatory barriers. At present multiculturalism has shifted to embrace a more inclusive Canada by expanding the participatory principles of citizenship. Multiracialism is linked with the society, building goals of cultural identity, social justice, citizenship, national unity, societal integration and equality. It is an official framework for the reconstruction of majority-minority relations that bolster the changes of living together with differences.

The ideal of multiculturalism in Canada poses two desirable outcomes: the survival of ethnic origin groups and their cultures along with the tolerance of this diversity and an absence of prejudice towards ethnic minorities. For this, it is necessary to know the state of ethnic identity in Canada and the ethnic attitudes of the people. A national survey conducted in 1991 which included measures of symbolic ethnic identity found that in general, Canadians identify most strongly with being Canadian rather than identifying with their ethnic origin and also Canadians took pride in their presumed tolerance of diversity and their absence of prejudice towards ethnic minorities. The results revealed that comfort rating for the various ethnic and immigrant groups were generally quite high. Though people reported less comfort being among many of the visible minority groups especially Indo-Pakistani and Arabs, multiculturalism has been employed as a tool by the minorities to open up economic, social and cultural channels. Many are reliant on multiculturalism

mechanism to **combat** discrimination in areas of employment, education, housing and **criminal** justice. It is a sort of moral authority that **portrays** minorities as legitimate contenders in the competition for power and the resources are thus calculated to extract **public and** global sympathy.

14.6 ASSESSMENT

The reaction to and the interpretation of the multiculturalism policy right after it was announced varied substantially. The French in Quebec **assumed** a fairly negative attitude towards it. Many Quebec leaders saw it as an attempt by the **federal** government to deflect attention from more important Quebec issues. **Some** interpreted it as a threat to the future of bilingualism and even the survival of the Francophone **community** in Quebec.

Similarly many of the Canadian Aboriginal peoples **were** of the opinion that multiculturalism as a **policy** detracted attention from their unique issue which, having longer historical roots, **should** take precedence over the **concern** of the other ethnic groups. Aboriginal leadership had maintained that gains are to be made by negotiating with the government for special Aboriginal legislation such as the changes to the Indian Act and the various treaties and by demanding new policies of direct benefit to them. Such attitude towards multiculturalism revealed the competition and tensions among the various minority groups as they pursued their interest in relation to the majority group and the society at large.

The leftist intellectuals have claimed that the **policy** has been a method used by the establishment to contain rather than integrate minority ethnic groups by offering alternative **channels** that prevent them from moving into the mainstream **position** in society. Still others have looked at it as a method for 'cooling off the **problem group**' in society and allowing the policy to be changed or abandoned **once** the **minority groups** demands have diminished.

It has **also been** alleged that in spite of **multiculturalism**, the approach to immigrant's inclusion has remained staunchly assimilations throughout the development of the policy, and the definition of **ethnicity** has been reduced to folk arts and language since the **beginnings** of the identity phase. Other scholars also note the notion of multiculturalism expressed in Canada's multiculturalism policy seems to reflect the point of view and interests of a dominant group – providing a contradictory image of Canada as a mosaic. While the policy acknowledges the presence of culturally different groups as part of the multicultural reality, it **conceptualises** those groups as homogeneous. The ideology does not recognise multiplicity of perceptions, behaviours and practices of peoples in these groups as being real. On the one hand, individuals belonging to ethnic groups are assigned cultural values while on the other, they are given equal **opportunity** to **socially** position themselves within the mosaic based solely on 'individual talents, capabilities and skills'. A moral tension is prevalent **between** the value of **individualism** and equality and those of cultural or ethnic group distinctions.

In **addition**, the notion of multiculturalism as articulated in the **policy** has been criticised for **failing to recognise** the pervasive **nature** of racial discrimination in society. In an extensive examination of racism in Canada, Henry **argues** that racism is manifest in individuals and flourishes in the formal and informal practices of social, cultural, political and economic **institutions**. **Their** conclusion is that racism persists in law enforcement agencies, the justice

system, government, education, media, human services, and the arts. They contend that racism prevents the full participation of all members of the society in all aspects of Canadian life. The multicultural policy encourages contradictory notions – assimilation and managing and accommodating difference within a dominant, ethnocentric and homogeneous public.

Towards the end of 1980s, the multiculturalism policy came under renewed threats. There were pressures from the mainstream majority groups in Canada. They challenged the *raison-d'être* of the policy itself. In 1991, the government of Canada issued a report of Citizens Forum on Canada's Future, known as the Spicer Commission Report based on the interviews of some 40 thousand individuals. The report asserted that Canadians accept and value Canada's cultural diversity and that the commission enthusiastically agreed with the wish of the ethno cultural groups that their background be respected. Yet it recommended that those who wish to preserve and promote their languages and culture should pay for it **themselves** and that governments have no business entrenching and funding 'remembrance of ethno cultural origins'. The report recommended that the federal government funding for multiculturalism activities be eliminated save for the activities that help the immigrant's orientation and reduction of racial discrimination and promotion of equality. The key goal for **multiculturalism** should be to welcome all Canadians to an evolving mainstream – and thus encourage real respect for diversity but this mainstream meant importance of and concern over Canadian national institutions and symbols. The Spicer Report can be said to be the characteristic of the negative mainstream reaction to the policy of multiculturalism 20 years after its introduction.

In addition to this critique, the mid-1990s was the period in which the Canadian government was downsizing their budgets. In the early 1980s, the total budget for administration of the policy was around 30 million dollars. By 1996, it had been reduced to around 17 million. The administrators of the policy were pressed to undertake a re-evaluation of the policy's goal. Suggestions were made to curtail all the grants to ethnic community **organisations**. Such grants had been the backbone of the policy and their elimination would reduce the policy to insignificance. Though the government did not accept all such suggestions, in 1997, it issued a new state of priorities. The statement and the programme guidelines **reaffirmed** the policy of multiculturalism but it focused on three main goals: identity, **civic participation and social justice**. The goal of identity **supports** the recognition given to the diverse cultures in Canada with the idea of developing a 'sense of belonging to and attachment to Canada'. Civil participation places a stronger emphasis on the development of a common community, involving a variety of ethnic minority and majority groups in joint cooperative ventures. The goal of social justice emphasises equity among all groups and the elimination of racism for that purpose. The programme for the first time **excluded** support to regular annual general meetings of **an** organisation or associations, festivals, camps, religious activities celebrations of foreign national days, ongoing production of regular newsletters, newspapers, magazines and radio and television broadcasts,

Similarly, other conservative mainstream bodies also expressed negative views on **multiculturalism**. For example, the Reform Party of Canada **formed** in 1987 having its roots in **Western** Canada called for the elimination of the multicultural policy, for the preservation of cultural backgrounds as a matter of purely **personal** choice and for preservation and promotion of the 'national culture' into which immigrants were to be encouraged to integrate. Such views were echoed by another political party of Canada, the Progressive Conservative Party at its convention in 1991 where it called for the abandonment

of the multiculturalism policy and instead a national identity be fostered by which all people would be 'loyal to the Canadian ideal'.

11.7 SUMMARY

In spite of criticism, Canada is considered as unique, as it is the only country that is legally committed to multiculturalism. The multicultural policy encapsulated in the Multiculturalism Act 1988 is seen by many as a proactive articulation by the government recognising diversity and committing it to the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canada. The government of Canada recognises that every individual is entitled to receive equal treatment and protection under the law, that every individual has the right to practice his religion and that every individual has equal opportunity, without discrimination, to live a fulfilled life. Also implied in the policy is the recognition that inequality exists in the Canadian economic, social, cultural and political life and that in past Canada's discriminatory practices on the basis of race, colour or ethnic origin occurred. In this context, the slogan 'unity in diversity' became very popular in Canada. It implied that all people in the Canadian society could be united through an **affirmation** of their diversity or distinctiveness. People are free to express difference or as a member of a distinct group; individuals, regardless of their small group affiliations, are recognised as equal participants within society.

However, the **response** and reaction to the policy of multiculturalism and the shifts in the priorities indicate that there are a number of significant sociological processes taking place within the Canadian society. For one thing, there has been a competition among the different ethnic minority groups for appropriation of the policy, i.e., attempts to have the policy serve the needs and interests of groups other than those who originally pressed for its enactment, e.g., competition between the old and new ethnic groups, between non-white racial categories and those of white category, between the new emerging middle-man minority groups and other minority groups. Secondly, the reaction of the majority groups both in English Canada and in Quebec seems to indicate that the objective of the policy as they were in the past and the retention of diverse identities that it stimulates present a symbolic threat to the majority's hegemony in Canada. This can explain the pressure coming **from** the majority mainstream to either discontinue the policy or change it so that it serves only the purpose of the facilitating immigrant adjustment to the mainstream society. The objective presents a '**definition** of situation' of ethnic diversity within the larger society different from the one in the original policy. In other words, the purpose is not to include an emphasis on identity retention and give recognition to the identity of the ethnic group but to emphasise exclusively on immigration and the elimination of barriers to societal adjustment. It is a social problem to be solved by means of multiculturalism policy and will disappear once it is solved. On the whole there is not much racism since different races get a chance to grow up together and they learn to respect each other. There is a widened art pallet – different nations contribute their cultural traditions and **art** to Canada. Since Canada is solely made of immigrants, there will be no Canada without multiculturalism. It helps all the Canadians to get along without which different ethnic groups would still be arguing over the concerned rights and freedom.

11.8 EXERCISES

- 1) Enumerate the policy of multiculturalism **as** articulated in the Canadian laws.
- 2) Briefly examine the governmental policy towards the ethnic and race relations in the post World War-II era.
- 3) Evaluate the ideology and objectives of multiculturalism in Canada.
- 4) Do you think that multiculturalism, as a matter of public policy, is discriminatory in Canada?
- 5) Write an essay on the policy of multiculturalism **as** adopted in Canada bringing out its merits and demerits.