A CRITICAL RESPONSE TO WILL KYMLICKA’S VIEW OF MULTICULTURALISM

A. S. M. ANWARULLAH BHUIYAN

Abstract: The objective of this article is to consider how multiculturalism, minority rights, and nation-building have been defended by Will Kymlicka. For this purpose, I will first attempt to spell out the answers to the following questions: is it possible to defend minority rights in a liberal state? What is the problem regarding this defence of national minorities? Does anybody benefit from minority rights within a nation-building process? In order to find out the answer to these questions, I will first introduce the main line of thought found in Will Kymlicka’s views on the defence of the rights of national minorities, the nation-building process, and multiculturalism. Later, I will reassess the views of Kymlicka in finding the ways to defend national minorities with the aim of providing support to the minority cultures.

Keywords: multiculturalism, national minority, minority rights, societal culture, nation-building, Heraclitean pluralism.

Introduction

Will Kymlicka, an exponent of political philosophy, wrote Multicultural Citizenship (1995) in which he integrates the view of minority rights into liberal theory. In this book, he attempts to spell out the answer to the question: how are we to understand multiculturalism? According to him, a state may be multicultural in either a multinational sense or polyethnic sense or in both senses. In order to gain a clear understanding of the problem, he explores various distinctions, i.e., national minorities and ethnic groups and internal restrictions and external protection and so on. Through these distinctions Kymlicka strengthens and clarifies the conception of minority rights. I will firstly summarize his conception on the nature of multiculturalism and then I will explore some of the drawbacks of his theory.

Kymlicka on Multiculturalism

In a broader sense, Kymlicka specifies the term multiculturalism (1995, 2002) as one of the basic theories of political philosophy that is normative in approach. Different societies use this term differently (Kymlicka 2002, 373). In Canada and Australia, for example, multiculturalism is used to refer only to the “accommodation of immigrant groups”, in the
USA the term is often used to refer to all forms of “identity politics” including ethno-cultural
groups, women, gays, lesbians, and people with disabilities. But, Kymlicka uses this term
as the “claim of ethno-cultural groups”, which includes immigrants, national minorities,
indigenous peoples, racial groups, and ethno-religious groups (Kymlicka 2002, 373).

Ethno-cultural groups have two common features:

[T]hey go beyond familiar set of political and civil rights of individual citizens which are
protected in all liberal democracies (ibid., 335);

and

[T]hey are adopted with the intention of recognizing and accommodating the distinctive
identities and needs of ethno-cultural groups’ (ibid., 335).

This normative approach can be supplemented by the mere fact of ethno-cultural diversity
which is descriptive in nature.

In his multiculturalism, Kymlicka mentions two broad forms of cultural diversity. The first one arises from the “incorporation of previously self-governing, territorially
concentrated cultures into a larger state” (Kymlicka 1995, 10). And, in the second case
“[cultural] diversity arises out of individual and family migration of people who form ethnic
groups in the larger society” (1997, 408). The first form of cultural diversity is a “national
minority” and the second one is “ethnic groups”. Kymlicka observes a distinction between
these two forms of cultural diversity. In a multinational society national minorities groups
are voluntarily incorporated communities; on the other hand, ethnic groups are voluntary
immigrants in a polyethnic society.

Liberal defenders of multiculturalism make a distinction between these two forms of
“minorities rights”: (i) “bad minorities rights” and (ii) “good minorities rights”. The first
form involves “restricting individual rights” and the second one involves “supplement[ing]
individual rights”. Moreover, Kymlicka identifies two forms of “minorities rights” in relation
to the following distinctions: i. internal restrictions, which involves the right of a group
against its own members, ii. external protection, on the other hand, involves the right of a
group against the larger society (Kymlicka 2002, 340).

Internal restrictions involve “intra-group relations”; on the other hand, “external
protection” involves “inter-group relations”. Both “internal restrictions” and “external
protection” are labeled as “collective rights”. According to Kymlicka, both of these ideas
are problematic in practice. He argues that “internal restrictions” ignore individual rights
in the name of group solidarity. For example, every member of a liberal society protects the
right to attend church or to criticize. But, a society may restrict the freedom of its members
by arguing that they should not have legal rights to criticize the religious values of others.
Even the group can argue that “its member should not have a legal right to an education, to
freedom of marriage partners, or to equality in divorce” (ibid., 341).

According to Kymlicka, all of these restrictions are internal. On the other hand, external
protection is a source of unfairness among the groups. But, the liberalists find more trouble
with “internal restriction”. They also opine that a group should not have legal rights to
restrict the civil rights of its members in the name of protecting their culture, land claims or
language right. Kymlicka’s liberal conception of multiculturalism is consistent with “external
protections”, which seems as “external rights”. The question may be raised here: why does Kymlicka defend “external rights” instead of “internal rights”? Kymlicka argues that internal rights are not voiced so much in contemporary politics of difference. They even force us to create rights by regulating groups, which have often been engaged in a perceived conflict between individual and the collective rights. If we construct group rights by perceiving “external rights” then it would be possible to preserve the culture of cultural minority rights. And, it would also become possible to take a stand against the domination of a majority culture.

**Societal culture and freedom-culture relationship**

This section will consider how Kymlicka defends the view of “minority rights”. Kymlicka states that “liberal minority rights” is based on the worth of “culture as a context of choice”. The freedom-culture connection is the most important issue for defending minority rights, which ensures “secure cultural membership”. Every member of any culture in the society can enjoy it in varied degrees. Freedom is the central condition of a “secure cultural membership”, which could not be meaningful without participation in any “societal culture”. As he states in his *Multicultural Citizenship*: “Freedom involves making choices amongst various options, and our societal culture not only provides these options, but also makes them meaningful to us” (Kymlicka 1995, 84).

Kymlicka emphatically points out that it is possible for individuals to understand their freedom if they have access to a “societal culture” (1995, 84). As I understand it, Kymlicka does not place emphasis on “minority culture”, rather, he is concerned with a particular kind of culture — “societal culture”. Kymlicka (1995) points out some features of “societal culture”:

- culture which provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres (*ibid.*, 76);

- and

  [A]n intergenerational community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or home land, sharing a distinct language history (*ibid.*, 18).

Through these two features of “societal culture”, it is easy to draw the conclusion that any sort of culture would be meaningful if able to provide a “meaningful life” across the full range of human activities, “including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres” (*ibid.*, 75).

**Benign-neglects and Nation-building**

How is an ethno-cultural group received in liberal societies? Usually, the common assumption is that the liberal state follows a principle of “benign neglects” towards “ethno-cultural diversity”. “Benign neglects” means “the state is indifferent to the ethno-cultural groups to reproduce themselves over time” (Kymlicka 2002, 344). He makes a clear
difference between “liberal neutrality” and “benign-neglects”. Benign neglects worked very well in accommodating ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. This principle helped ensure relative peace and tranquility in the context of the civil war between Catholic and Protestants in Europe. As a neutral liberal state the United States of America follows the principle of “benign-neglects” towards “ethno-cultural diversity” which is reflected in the fact that there is no constitutionally recognized official language (Walzer 1992, 100-101, cf Kymlicka 2002, 345). On the other hand, “liberal neutrality” promotes a particular language and religion. For example, around the world, English is a more common used language but that does not mean this is the best language. Most people use English because it is an efficient means of communication (Kymlicka 2002, 344).

According to liberal neutrality, there should be no ranking in the intrinsic merits of a good life. Following this, liberal neutrality recommends not thinking that speaking English is intrinsically more worthy than speaking French or any other language or that following a particular religion is more worthy than being an atheist. It is not necessary to promote any languages, religion, values and culture because of their higher ranking. But, for the sake of some neutral reasons, the promotion of some particular religions, languages and cultures may be required. That does not mean that any specific language should be treated as a state-language, or that any religion should be considered the best one. So, a state should not promote English as the best language, but it can promote English as the most common language.

In the USA, according to Kymlicka, ethno-cultural neutrality is undermined for various reasons. In school children have to learn English and immigrants have to learn English to attain citizenship of the USA. If one cannot speak English, it is very difficult to find a job or any employment. This domination of the English language in the USA is not friendly to ethno-cultural neutrality. This is why Kymlicka claims that language is one of the potential means of undermining the rights of minority groups.

The common assumption is that a liberal state follows the principle of benign neglects towards “ethno-cultural diversity”. Kymlicka thinks liberal states promote a societal culture through nation-building. He has a very positive attitude towards nation-building. Only liberal nation-building state entertains the “creation of national celebration”, “public holiday”, “national history”, etc. There is no dominant group can involve actively in the state nation-building. However, Kymlicka’s final conclusion is that “values of ways of life” can reinforce the “multiculturalist national-identity”.

A liberal state cannot adopt the ethno-cultural neutrality. This is why he proposes that they engage with the “nation-building” process. All the liberal democratic states have undertaken the nation-building process as their mainstream culture. In this regard we can quote from Kymlicka (2001, 23):

They [liberal democratic states] have encouraged and sometimes forced all the citizens on the territory of the state to integrate into common public institutions operating in a common language.

He proposed a model of a state which is engaged in nation-building. Within the process of nation-building every liberal democratic state considers minority rights, which helps protect against unjust disadvantages. He argues that nation-building and minority rights are
dialectically related. Through this process a liberal state can strengthen a particular “societal culture”. Kymlicka uses the term “societal culture” as a “territorially-concentrated culture”. It includes language, public and private life, social, religious economic and educational life. It also covers the full range of human activities. As Kymlicka (2002, 346) states:

I call it a societal culture to emphasize that it involves a common language and social institutions, rather than common religious beliefs, family customs, or personal lifestyles.

He also opines that “minority rights” are important for a nation-building. An absence of “minority rights” necessarily creates injustice for both groups. How can we avoid this injustice? Kymlicka gives a solution in this regard. National minority groups should be involved in their state’s nation-building process, and immigrant groups should follow the norms of “integration” into the practice of “social culture”.

According to Kymlicka, in order to fully accommodate various minorities rights the state nation-building policy must be both (i) legitimate and (ii) non-harmful for minorities activities. Nation-building in a liberal democratic state is, according to Kymlicka, majority nation-building and should satisfy three conditions (Kymlicka 2001, 48; 2002, 362):
(1) No groups of long-term residents can be permanently refused nation membership or citizenship;
(2) If minorities are to be integrated into the nation then the integration should be conducted in a thin sense involving only basic institutions and languages; and
(3) National minorities are allowed to engage in their own nation-building to provide their distinct societal culture.

Kymlicka points out that fair integration is a bi-linear process from society to immigrants and immigrants to society. The demands of minorities must be seen in the context of state nation-building. Most of the western democratic societies are a “complex package of robust forms of nation-building combined and constrained by robust forms of minority rights” (Kymlicka 2002, 365). Their immigrants groups try to integrate with their new socio-cultural atmosphere and the new society tries to integrate with the immigrants in order to adjust more to the “ethno-cultural diversity”.

Critical exposition of Kymlicka’s multiculturalism

In his notion of multiculturalism, Kymlicka emphasizes the concepts of “societal culture” and “nation-building”. According to him, nation-building is based on the principle of “benign-neglects”. He states further that the principle of benign-neglects should be substituted by a concept of “societal culture” (ibid., 347). Though, it is not clear how the principle of “benign-neglects” can be substituted with the more appropriate model of the co-existence of multiple “societal-cultures” with nation-building taking a major central role. Thus, we find some puzzles, which have not been cleared up by Kymlicka.

First, I would like to raise the question: is his notion of “societal culture” normative in approach? Kymlicka claims “societal culture” is a normative construction in favor of nation-building. But, his analysis of “societal culture” is descriptive in nature. In his view of “societal culture”, he introduces much de facto empirical evidence by reviewing the process of formation of “societal culture” in Canada and United States of America. This descriptive
consideration of the term “societal culture” is reflected as a specific way of life for certain groups of minorities (such as immigrants) which is associated with their country of origin. It also indicates “a set of practices” which includes habits, beliefs and ethnic values. If we identify “societal culture” in a descriptive sense, then Kymlicka could not claim the liberal nation-building as an alternative to “societal culture”.

Second, the puzzle over the normative and descriptive distinction appears clearly in the dichotomy of cultural minority and ethnic groups. The distinction between national minority and ethnic groups has also been objected to by different critiques. Seyla Benhabib points out that the distinction between minorities and ethnic groups is difficult to sustain on the descriptive level (2002, 61), but it is possible on the normative level. In that sense, the difference should be dynamic, not static one. But, Kymlicka’s conception of societal culture is static in nature. If societal culture is static in nature then the culture might have possibility to be descriptive rather than normative.

However, most of the western liberal states, according to Kymlicka, have been involved in the process of nation-building. In order to integrate its citizen into a common platform in respect of national language and common public institutions, he proposes “societal culture”. In his dialectical form of nation-building and minority rights, Kymlicka has shown that there is a dialectical relationship between state nation-building and minority rights. In this dialectical relationship, he also creates a bridge between “societal culture” and “freedom”. He states (1995, 83):

[F]reedom involves making choice among various options, and our societal culture not only provides these options, but also makes them meaningful to us.

On the other hand, autonomy could help the individual to make choices and under this autonomy individuals can formulate, scrutinize and revise their life plans and increase their ability to make meaningful choices in life (ibid.). He points out that it is possible for individuals to understand their freedom if they have access to a “societal culture”. In response to his conception of “societal culture” and its relationship to freedom and autonomy, we can explore some arguments, which will help us to find the inconsistency of his arguments.

Firstly, Kymlicka states that members of a minority culture need cultural rights to sustain their lives in the majority culture. In most countries there are different sorts of minority groups, such as, religious minorities, ethnic minorities, immigrants minorities, and so on. Is the status or the degree of cultural rights the same for the all minority groups? We can revisit his conception of “societal culture” in defense of “cultural rights” for the national minority. On the other hand, he also distinguishes between “culture of immigration” and “culture of national groups”. Regarding the context of this difference, we may raise another question: what other traits or facts exist beyond this difference? For example, do members of immigrant groups fight in ways that are not similar to the members of national minorities?

It is also a fact that immigrant groups always find it difficult to settle down with the majority group and incorporate the majority’s culture, language, identity and so on. Ethnic minority groups, around the world, like to sustain their lives with their own culture, language and ethnic-beliefs. But, Kymlicka’s conception of “societal culture” addresses “freedom” and the “autonomy of the individual” as conditions of a uniform culture for all minorities groups. It has been noted before that there is a difference between the different minority groups and
their different living conditions. If this is the case, we might ask: how does “societal culture” would function in a similar manner whereas living style is different in the different societies?

Secondly, there is a problem of ambiguity in relation to “societal culture” and “freedom”. We can think about a person who is not able to understand the society in which he lives, or even has no choice over activities in life; this necessarily implies that the person would not be able to take any responsibility for the society or even himself. Can we imagine such a person in society? If there is such a worthless person they would be in need of state assistance. On the other hand, Kymlicka’s “societal culture” is a complex amalgamation of all the cultural activities in a society. If an individual can comprehend the societal activities, then s/he can enjoy a more autonomous life with a better set of choices. But, the person I mentioned earlier cannot enjoy such an autonomous life because of his/her lack of comprehension of the “societal culture”. This example gives us the sense that Kymlicka’s notion of “societal culture” is not conceivable for all the members of a society irrespective of their talent, intellect and performance. This may also be the case when some of the members of a different culture or any other orthodox religious community do not perceive the context of the new culture and cannot become involved in the range of activities in life.

We can give an example of a society in which the majority people are atheist. In this society there are also a few Muslims. We know that Muslim people construct their own culture by incorporating the norms of Islam, which are different from those of the example society. What happens in this case is that the Muslim should substitute their culture for the larger one in order to live in the society. In order to enjoy freedom and meaningful choices in life, the Muslim members of the society would need to incorporate some of the components of the majority culture even if they do not practice all the norms and practices of the society.

Once again, supposing they adopt the majority culture or Kymlicka’s “societal culture” then the minority Muslim (in the atheist society already mentioned) would have to stop wearing the veil and burqa and have to lead their life according to the majority culture. In that case, how could we claim that Muslim people are enjoying freedom within the process of “societal culture” in that society? So, to lose some forms and contents of a particular culture is to lose the corresponding freedom of the people. For example, in Bangladesh, there are different kinds of small ethnic groups living with their own pattern of culture, languages, costume and life style. If we build a large spectrum of society following the concept of Kymlicka’s concept of “societal culture”, then it is all right to think that the people necessarily enjoy freedom and autonomy. We can imagine a group of indigenous people entering into the pattern of Kymlicka’s “societal culture”. What happens then? Would they have their own beliefs, customs, language and life style? Experience tells us differently: it is quite impossible to belong to their full-fledged cultural domain if they adopt Kymlicka’s conception of “societal culture”. The point is that Kymlicka’s attempt to make a connection between ‘societal culture’ and ‘freedom and autonomy’ is impossible.

Each society has evolved with a different culture which is influenced by religion, race, color, language and gender orientation. But, every good society has multi-culturalist policies which are aimed at respecting the multiple ethno-cultural groups. For that purpose some western societies have attempted to reconstruct nation-building through the multi-culturalist policies. Over the last two hundred years the model of nation-building emerged in the west as political institutions in the replacement of empires and feudal states. In most cases the
nation-building process has a tremendous effect on national minorities. The nation-building model has an effect on the language, culture and economic situation of the minorities group. For example, in the 1980s, the Bangladesh government attempted to reconstruct the “right and freedom” of all the minorities groups (tribal communities: Chakma, Tripura, Morong, Garos, Santal and so on), and religious group (Hindus and Buddha) under the norms of Bangladeshi nationalism. In the name of Bangladeshi nationalism the government then deployed a number of military brigades in the tribal-living areas to control the land, forestry and also politics. This did not materially reconstruct any of the positive senses of nation-building rather the state enhanced its majority over the minorities. In using this example, I would like to state that nation-building as a multiculturalist policy cannot reform a state universally.

The majority group always rules over the minority, other minority groups do not receive priority, they themselves cannot reach consensus through the process of nation-building. In this context, we can present another example from Sierra Leone, where different ethnic communities are in conflict. There are no dominant majority groups. So, nation-building in Sierra-Leone cannot be undertaken by a majority group. But, different minority groups are in a conflict situation which makes it difficult to establish nation-building through association. Nation-building as a societal process may be experimentally compatible within the context of some western states like Canada, but universally the notion cannot be applicable for all multicultural states. So, the nation-building process in the multicultural society is not a universal solution.

Kymlicka defends the fact that in order to process the “societal culture” of minorities groups they adopt the process of nation-building. In his recent work “The New Debate on Minorities Rights” (2007) he observes that a single country may adopt more than one societal culture at a time (ibid., 25-50). For example, many multination states such as Canada, Spain, and Switzerland adopt an understanding of minority rights within the process of this conception which he theorizes as multiculturalism. In the society, the national majority can reconstruct nation-building in a legitimate way. It implies that minority groups have a right to engage in “legitimate nation-building” (ibid., 38).

National minorities deserve fair treatment by the state. Most of the minorities groups such as indigenous people around the world have already lost their own “(societal) culture” through an unjust societal system. Such unjust treatment can be eliminated through the practice of the nation-building process within the minorities group. Could nation-building theory be justified universally? Kymlicka’s notion of nation-building of multiculturalism has mainly developed in the context of western society particularly in the Canadian context. But, we can mention here some African tribal communities or African states like Nigeria, Somalia and Sierra-Leone where no majority group exists, only minority groups. There is no appropriate context for nation-building in these states. Most Asian countries such as India have a great number of ethnic and religious minority groups. In the Eastern part of India there are seven provinces called the seven sisters which have different ethnic groups. The people of these provinces have failed to reach consensus in order to reconstruct nation-building in the sense of its exact meaning. So, nation-building might be a discourse of majority groups use to sustain their power, but minorities rights do not prevail in a large context. This is why it is imperative to search for an alternative discourse.
Kymlicka’s three conditions of nation-building

Are these three conditions of nation-building compatible with the context of some East Asian liberal democratic countries in the process of nation-building? We can mention the examples of Cambodia, a liberal democratic country in East Asia, where the nation-building process does not meet the conditions in its proper sense:

1. Cambodia takes nation-building policy as its liberal democratic policy. Without following the first conditions of nation-building, Cambodia has been demonstrating nation-building within the liberal democratic policy. For example, members of Vietnamese and Chinese ethnic groups are long-term residents, but in the nation-building process they are excluded from holding citizenship of the state. They are regarded as “foreign residents”. Not only that they are also excluded from enjoying fundamental human rights as well. So, nation-building in Cambodia was undertaken without meeting the first condition of Kymlicka’s nation-building process.

2. The second condition claims that there should be socio-cultural integrations in a ‘thin’ sense. There are two types of multiculturalism: thin multiculturalism and thick multiculturalism. Thin multiculturalism refers to the supposition that in liberal state there is a disagreement among the members over things like languages they choose to speak, belief and norms. On the ‘thin’ conception, multiculturalism is considered to be constructing to Canadian national identity, which is liberal nationalism in the real sense of the term. But, in Bangladesh or Cambodia they are framing their nation-building policy on the basis of a ‘thick’ sense of nationalism. Around the world, most states are involved in building their nationality either in the strict sense of ethnic nationality or state neutrality. Both state policies are somehow dominated by the majority people. India, Cambodia and Bangladesh in their state constitution promised to ensure equal rights for all citizens irrespective of their cult, belief, religion, color and identity, but in practice in these countries there is clear domination by the members of the majority groups. Even, in Canada members of immigrants groups have not been well treated as well as its nation-building policy prescribed. The example mentioned above makes it clear that it is implausible to meet Kymlicka’s second condition of nation-building in all perspective.

3. The third condition of nation-building suggests that majority nation-building should be just. It requires that all minorities groups, i.e. indigenous, national minorities and so on, be allowed to engage in their own nation-building. Is it possible in a true sense to maintain their governmental rights and special representation rights to provide protection against unjust nation-building? There is no clear answer to this in Kymlicka’s interpretation.

Concluding remarks

We can revisit Kymlicka’s notion of Multiculturalism where he attempts to make an entailment relation between multiculturalism and the liberal sense of equality. Sometimes it seems that his notion of multiculturalism has entailed from the “liberal approach to equality”. But, Kymlicka does not allow any “liberal values” to be imposed onto minorities groups whether they are an “immigrants group” or a “national minorities group”. This is one sort of limitation in his theory.
Kymlicka’s multiculturalism is based on the conception of the cultural differences of a state. In those differences some of the groups may be majority and some may be minority. In that context, we may imagine a common territory, where there are multiple tiny communities. Such communities would cease to exist as separate ethno-cultural formations. It is not unlikely that the majority “societal culture” would dominate over the tiny communities. Moreover, if the tiny communities and the majority group compete to participate in their own nation-building process then incoherence would result: the result might be conflict within the multicultural state. But, as Kymlicka claims the main purpose of arranging such a society under the scheme of “societal culture” is to achieve harmony among the different groups. It is also a fact that “societal culture” cannot maintain the norms of societal integrity.

Throughout the second part of this article, I have explained the uneven nature of the effect of Kymlicka’s multiculturalism. This is why multiculturalism needs a radical overhauling. In this respect, we can welcome a different wave of thought known as “post-multiculturalism”. I would like to mention here that a post-multicultural critique is not synonymous with the more radical term of “anti-multiculturalism”. Most of the anti-multiculturalists like Brian Barry (2000) and Samuel Huntington (2004) assume that multiculturalism is based on the repudiation of some of the enlightenment values such as “democratic citizenship”, “individual freedom” and “human rights”. Anti-multiculturalists hold the view that multiculturalists also regret the republican model of national citizenship. On the contrary, post-multicultural exponents Nancy Fraser (2001), Anne Philips (2007) and Seyal Benhabib (2002) assume that multiculturalism has often achieved these enlightenment values. But, most of the multiculturalists models including that of Kymlicka have failed to solve the problem of multiple dimensional issues relating to a state. Post-multiculturalists assume that multiculturalism is seen as an exaggeration of the internal unity of cultures (Phillips 2007, 14) and that it “solidifies differences that are currently more fluid, and makes people from other cultures seem more exotic and distinct than they really are” (ibid.). Phillips states that the interpretation of multiculturalism has become “a cultural straitjacket” rather than “a cultural liberator” (ibid.).

Post-multiculturalists tend to criticize multiculturalism as a model of false universalism, but their notion is not against multiculturalism. Post-multiculturalists are very sympathetic to multiculturalism, particularly the urge to achieve an integrated cultural society. This is why all of the post-multiculturalists agree that it is better not to regret the notion, but to radically overhaul it. In this regard, I would like to offer the alternative approach of Scheffler (2007). In his article “Immigration and the Significance of Culture”, he defines the term culture as “always in flux and that individuals normally reach to culture through the acknowledgement of multiple affiliation and allegiances” (ibid., 105-106). In this definition the term “culture” appears as a flexible, permanently, and changeable formation. Instead of the state nation-building process it is reasonable to follow Scheffler’s “Heraclitean pluralism” (ibid., 109). According to Scheffler,

Heraclitean pluralism asserts that the best way of accommodating the conservative impulse in general is also the best way of accommodating reasonable preservationist projects namely, by giving individuals the freedom to structure their lives with reference to a diverse array of values, practices, and ideas (ibid.).
This model tends to state that the world is constantly changing, therefore, any sorts of conservation value practices, ways of life, and ideals are necessarily involved in their modification, extension, and reinterpretation of changing circumstances. Heraclitean pluralism makes possible the “creative reinterpretation and reinvention of inherited cultural materials that is essential to a culture’s long-term survival” (ibid.). Further, he states that “cultural preservation is possible only if people have the freedom to engage in this interpretive process and to act on its conclusions” (ibid.). Any genuine free society must have a pluralistic approach and Heraclitean pluralism allows for the accommodation of “diverse ways of living and schemes of value”. By applying this framework instead of “state nation-building” it is possible to preserve any of the majority or minority cultural rights. Thus, Scheffler’s “Heraclitean pluralism” would be a more reasonable alternative to Kymlicka’s multicultural program.

References

Department of Philosophy
Jahangirnagar University
Savar, Dhaka-1342
Bangladesh
E-mail: bhuiyanPhil@yahoo.com