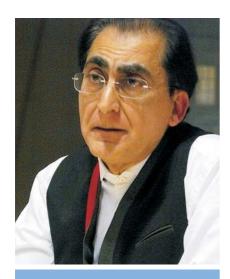# MULTICULTURALISM IS INEVITABLE

Tariq Modood

TARIQ MODOOD – Professor of Sociology at the University of Bristol (UK). He is the Founding Director of the Research Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship at the University of Bristol. His books include 'Not Easy Being British' (1992) and 'Multicultural Politics' (2005)

Politicians are very non-specific about what they are criticising when they say that multiculturalism is dead. They say that they are against separatism, with communities emphasising their separateness from the societies in which they have settled. But to be quite honest, very few communities do such a thing. I don't see this happening in a big way. Moreover, even if they do that, it is not clear that this is multiculturalism. People who say that they are advocates of multiculturalism, and that includes me, do not say that we're in favour of having separate communities.

Most multiculturalists have criticised assimilation and it is the minority that has to change to fit in with the majority exclusively - that is to say, only one way - and that it is assumed that there's a single dominant majority identity. Of course, majorities themselves exhibit a number of different identities and argue amongst themselves about what the dominant culture actually is. Thus, I don't think it is clear exactly what politicians mean when they say that multiculturalism is dead.

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But in terms of working models that are available today, one of them involves basically saying 'we are going back to assimilation', and we just emphasise, as conservatives in Germany do for instance, 'Leitkultur' – the idea that there's a dominant German culture, that everybody within Germany has to become part of that, and that they need to work hard to join that.

In the second variant, we would say that no, that's not enough or that's not liberal, as it is forcing people into one particular cultural orientation and a liberal society shouldn't do that. Instead, what we should do is emphasize that there is indeed discrimination and racism against certain groups of people in society, that this affects their chances in life and that, therefore, we should bring about their integration by allowing them to integrate and preventing the barriers that are set up against them or that relegate them to a position of second-class citizens. I call this second model 'individualist integration'.

And the third way of emphasising integration is to say that, actually, nobody should have to fit anyone else's identity. They could represent a mixture of identities, and they could have multiple identities and these identities can change over time. It promotes the idea that we're all composites and that we are all mixtures, and this is a good thing. Therefore, what we should resist is anybody who tries to make us fit just one identity. We should have, as it were, a free market of identities with no identity dominating the others. That is the third model, which we can call 'diversity', as it emphasises the concept of diversity.

Well, many people would like to stop here. And I guess my question to them is: **do we think that we can achieve integration with just one or several of the first three models, namely: assimilation, individualist integration or diversity**? If we cannot and if there are groups in society that would be still left out and stand as not being comfortable, not fitting in, not being integrated into the wider society or country, then this would ultimately mean that the first three models that we have referred to are not bringing about integration. My own view is that, in Western Europe, we are not going to achieve integration without multiculturalism due to the fact that we can successfully integrate some groups according to the first three models, but we probably can't integrate more groups without also including multiculturalism as one of the four models.

In the fourth model, which I know is very unpopular, we have the model that I would call 'multiculturalism', where we say: we are doing all the three things that have been mentioned but, in addition, we have to find ways of accommodating groups - not just individuals, but groups - and that this should be up to individuals to be members of identity groups if they want to be and to the extent that they want to be. However, in so far as that these groups do exist within society, we should ensure that they are included in the public life of the country and that they are given some status recognition to show that they are part of the country. So, as you know, Islam is a part of Britain or France or Germany, just as black people of African descent are also part of what it means to be British today.

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I think that we can develop multiculturalism as a way of showing how Europe or different parts of Europe are committed to liberal democratic ideals: freedom, equality, and fraternity. In the past, we may have exercised these ideals as liberty and equality in a context of relative national homogeneity with maybe one dominant culture or just a couple of cultures. Where we now have greater variety, we have to reinterpret liberty and equal citizenship in the context of this new pluralism. The negative reaction to multiculturalism may actually be undermining the basic democratic values and the level of commitment to them. ■

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