



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTICULTURALISM

*International Scientific Research Journal*

**Baku - 2020**



*“The more nations are united in a state, the richer it becomes, as each of them contributes to the world culture and civilization...”*

*Heydar Alirza oglu Aliyev  
National Leader of Azerbaijan*



*"Multiculturalism is a lifestyle in Azerbaijan."*

*Ilham Heydar oğlu Aliyev  
President of Azerbaijan Republic*

## Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

**Dear Readers!**

It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that Baku International Multiculturalism Center publishes biannual, international, double-blind peer-reviewed, open-access journal titled “International Journal of Multiculturalism”, covering the study of topics in the Social & Humanities aims to provide a forum for high quality research related to multiculturalism sciences and research.



The purpose of publishing the International Journal of Multiculturalism is to promote the traditions of tolerance that have been formed in Azerbaijan for centuries as well as to make a contribution to the environment of multiculturalism.

In Azerbaijan, multiculturalism is a state policy and a lifestyle. Azerbaijan is an example to the world with its own multicultural and tolerant style of life. The tolerance implemented by the government of Azerbaijan forms the foundation for even further strengthening of the friendship and brotherhood among the ethnic and religious communities living in our country. One of the ways in which the Great Leader, Heydar Aliyev, served our people was by developing multiculturalism in our country. The most significant value that Heydar Aliyev imparted to Azerbaijan was the ideology of Azerbaijanism, which has already become an important part of the ideology of multiculturalism. Azerbaijanism is what binds together all nations into one land and one ideology regardless of their ethnic or religious roots.

Today, President Ilham Aliyev resolutely carries on this policy. The policy of multiculturalism that is carried out under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev catalyzes integration processes within the country.

In 2014, the Baku International Multiculturalism Center was created to promote Azerbaijan’s model to the world and study other models. 2016 was announced as “The Year of Multiculturalism,” and 2017 was “Year of Islamic Solidarity.”

The Baku International Multiculturalism Center serves to promote conditions of multiculturalism and diversity in Azerbaijan. Our main goal is to preserve cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity in accordance with the ideology of Azerbaijanism as well as to introduce Azerbaijan to the world as a center of multiculturalism and to apply and encourage existing models for multiculturalism.


We particularly encourage submissions resulted from meaningful and ethical collaboration among international scholars and practitioners. The aim of the “International Journal of Multiculturalism” is to promote scholarly, realistic and contemporaneous research in the field of multiculturalism. The journal publishes quantitative and qualitative empirical research and reviews of research literature. Our main goal is to publish the work of a vigorous, well-networked international community of scholars and expand the subject areas of the journal.

We would like to invite you to send editorial, original and review papers for publication in the International Journal of Multiculturalism at your earliest convenience. The journal serves as a platform for communicating wealthy findings in the field of multiculturalism to the researchers and readers.

Members of the Editorial Board, selected by the criteria of their international scientific recognizability, will strive to contribute to the increase of the quality level and popularization of the International Journal of Multiculturalism as reviewers and consultants as well as authors of invited papers.

Finally, I would like to thank to the publishers and all members of the editorial board for giving me the opportunity to be editorial in chief. I request your active cooperation and wish you successful work in the forthcoming period.

**With all the best wishes,**



**Ravan Hasanov**  
**Editor-in-Chief**



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## SCOPE OF THE JOURNAL

International Journal of Multiculturalism is an international, double-blind peer-reviewed, open-access journal covering the study of topics in the social & Humanities aims to provide a forum for high quality research related to multiculturalism sciences and research. International Journal of Multiculturalism provides an interdisciplinary forum for scholars in fields of multicultural psychology, multicultural communication, education, management cross-disciplinary, social welfare, sociology, organizational /community development and related disciplines.

International Journal of Multiculturalism is published two times (April, October) a year by the Baku International Multiculturalism Center. The journal is published in English. To be published in the International Journal of Multiculturalism a paper must be substantial and original. The Editorial Board does not accept articles published or submitted for publication elsewhere the journal is published in both print and online versions.

We particularly encourage submissions resulted from meaningful and ethical collaboration among international scholars and practitioners. Submissions that advance from prescreening will be subject to originality-testing and double-blind review. The journal publishes quantitative and qualitative empirical research and reviews of research literature.

The voluntary service of international editors and reviewers have enabled International Journal of Multiculturalism to provide the open-access content to the global community with no subscription fees to readers and no article processing fees to authors. The journal is fully financially supported by Baku International Multiculturalism Center .

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## VOLUME 1, NUMBER 2, 2020

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Elizabeth J. SANDELL</b> Teaching university students for a Multicultural society.....	11
<b>David William PARRY</b> Time Travel and Chinghiz Aitmatov: Exploring the Rigours of Multicultural reading .....	32
<b>Ali ARABMOFRAD, Majid SAEIDI, Mohammad MOTAMEDI</b> The effect of Bilingualism on EFL Elementary Learners' listening comprehension: The case of Azeri- Turkish vs. Persian students.....	44
<b>Ashaq HUSSAIN</b> Pluralism and Communal Harmony: Studying the contribution of Sufis.....	65
<b>Haji Fuad NURULLAH</b> Multicultural values in the Noble Quran and the Prophet Muhammad's (s) Sunnah ( <i>the Prophet's tradition</i> ) .....	87
<b>Hassen ZRIBA</b> <i>Scientific Interview:</i> Interview with Professor Ali H. Raddaoui on his teaching experience in Multicultural classes .....	97
<b>Enrico L. JOSEPH</b> <i>Book Review:</i> Identity: The demand for dignity and the politics of resentment .....	107

## TEACHING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FOR A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

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### ABSTRACT

Throughout the world, populations of many countries are rapidly becoming more diverse than ever. Population composition is changing, whether measured by ethnicity or race, age or generation, immigration status, or internal displacement. Higher education institutions have an important role in preparing university graduates to interact with diverse groups. This focus guided our study: What teaching and learning strategies might enhance intercultural competence (ICC) among undergraduate students at a university? ICC was considered to be understanding of one's own culture as well as the capacity to understand, interpret, and adapt to other cultures. Investigators wanted to collect a set of activities to foster growth in students' ICC through knowledge, experience, reflection, and coaching. This project examined 278 scholarly articles to explore the teaching and learning strategies that appear to have made the difference. Using keywords such as multiculturalism, intercultural competence, diversity, higher education, coaching, reflection, service learning, and cultural partners, investigators used academic databases to locate related materials. Research articles were analyzed to locate effective pedagogical practices. The study reported evidence from academic literature about intensive, intentional, and reflective cross-cultural educational experiences that could have a positive impact on the ICC of undergraduate students. Impactful teaching and learning experiences include elements of knowledge, experience, coaching, and reflection. The author suggested specific teaching and learning activities that combine all four elements and may be customized to enhance almost any academic or professional preparation program: cultural autobiography, diversity stories, cultural partnership, and service learning.

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## **Introduction**

### *Statement of the Problem*

Past reports (Sandell and Tupy 2016) suggested that intentional and specific instructional strategies could result in statistically significant, positive changes in students' Intercultural Competence (ICC). Investigators wanted to collect a set of teaching and learning activities to foster student growth through knowledge, experience, reflection, and coaching. The study herein sought evidence from academic literature about intensive, intentional, and reflective cross-cultural educational experiences that could have a positive impact on the ICC of undergraduate students. This focus guided our study: What teaching and learning strategies might enhance intercultural competence (ICC) among undergraduate students at a university?

### **Significance of the Problem**

Throughout the world, populations of many countries are rapidly becoming more diverse than ever. Population composition is changing, whether measured by ethnicity or race, age or generation, immigration status, or internal displacement.

In the United States, race or ethnicity are often used as proxies for diversity. According to the United States Census Bureau (2014), by 2060, the United States will be a plurality nation with no majority population but with non-Latino whites as the largest single group. In 2010, people of color made up 37% of the U.S. population; by 2060, people of color are expected to represent 57% of the population.

Generation is another category of diversity. In the United States, by 2060, there will be six times the number of adults aged 65 and over (13.1 million to 90 million). The number of those 85 and older will more than triple, increasing from 5.9 million to 18.2 million (United States Census Bureau 2014).

Immigration (i.e., travel into another country for the purpose of permanent residence there) is increasing due to famine, war, weather, climate change, economic conditions, political unrest, or disease. Immigrants often must learn a new language in order to survive and thrive. In 2015, nearly 1 in 8 residents of the U.S. were immigrants, mostly from Latin America and Asia (United States Census Bureau 2013). Immigrants and US-born children of immigrants will drive overall workforce growth through 2035 (Cilluffo and Cohn 2017).

Individuals and families become internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to famine, war, weather, economic conditions, political unrest, or disease. IDPs are forced to flee from home yet remain within their country's borders. The United States experienced significant internal displacement as recently as 2005, when people from the Gulf States region in the southern United States, most notably New Orleans, Louisiana, were forced to leave their homes due to the devastation brought on by Hurricane Katrina. Collectively known as the Gulf Coast diaspora, many were unable to return to their homes due to a multitude of factors (Kromm and Sturgis 2008). More recently, persons with COVID-19 are sheltering in place according to their safe zones. Many of them are displaced and living away from their family households in an attempt to slow the pandemic (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2020).

### Responses of Higher Education

The teaching and learning strategies implemented by higher education institutions play an important role in preparing university students to interact with diverse groups. Faculty members are developing curriculums that consider race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and more. In this respect, universities are prime settings to achieve ICC; these institutions oftentimes introduce heterogeneity into the lives of students who have previously lived, worked, and played in relatively homogeneous environments.

Higher education creates opportunities for transformation. In response to the increasingly diverse populations, ICC could be considered one of the most crucial skills that university graduates need for their future careers in diverse societies (Chun and Evans 2016). Indeed, accreditation standards for many professions state the need to understand how to interact with diverse groups providing culturally appropriate services (Rubaii and Calarusse 2014). Consequently, higher education institutions are recognizing the importance of expanding student outcomes to include ICC (Brown and Jones 2007; Burnett and Huisman 2010; Wit, 1995; Greenholtz, 2000; Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman, 2003; Kimmel and Volet 2012; Lee, Poch, and Williams, 2012).

One key to maximizing the impact of higher education programs is to connect curricula with the institutional mission and learning goals (King, Brown, Lindsay, and Vanhecke, 2007). Minnesota State University, Mankato has embraced this challenge widely. An institutional strategic priority is "Leading Equity and Inclusive Excellence." To fulfill this priority, the University will "provide opportunities to

improve intercultural competence for a complex, diverse, and globalized society” and “increase the intercultural competence and capabilities of faculty and staff through intercultural engagement opportunities” (Minnesota State University, Mankato, 2016).

This investigator led a series of studies between 2013 and 2020 wherein undergraduate research assistants assisted in collecting and analyzing data from more than 1000 undergraduate students at Minnesota State University, Mankato, Minnesota, USA. The researchers collected data with the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman, 2003) as part of the instructional design of several general education courses. Several of these studies are summarized below.

Roche, Onadipe, and Jumakuliyeva (2015) reported that undergraduate students at MSU, Mankato were 95% likely to start their university studies in the stage of ethnocentric minimization, as measured by the IDI. These same results were also supported with additional data by Arndt and O’Rourke (2018).

In a study of 467 pre-service teachers between 2014 and 2017, Johnson and Adams (2017) found no differences in changes in ICC based on ethnic status, age group, region of childhood, study abroad, class in school, academic major, or semester of testing. Later, Rousemiller and Edwards (2018) analyzed the IDI scores of more than 800 students who took a one-semester general education course, Human Relations in a Multicultural Society. Results showed that the course made a statistically significant positive difference in student ICC. Carlyle, Hagar, and Stalcar (2019) examined the impact of a one-semester course, Introduction to Social Work. Comparing pre-instruction scores with post-instruction scores for 28 students, the analysis found statistically significant positive results.

O’Rourke and Arndt (2019) reported statistically significant positive growth in ICC among 47 preservice teachers between year 1, year 2, and year 3 in a teacher preparation program which emphasized ICC throughout the entire academic program.

Now, investigators wanted to collect strategies that could be incorporated into many courses, disciplines, and academic programs.

### **Definitions of Terms**

Various terms were used during the literature searches, during data analysis, and while collecting teaching and learning strategies. These terms are defined here.

*Coaching:* “A process that enables learning and development to occur and thus performance to improve. A successful coach requires a knowledge and understanding of process as well as the variety of styles, skills and techniques that are appropriate to the context in which the coaching takes place (Parsloe, 1999).”

*Culture:* The pattern of beliefs, behaviors, and values maintained by groups of interacting people, and passed to future generations (Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman, 2003). Culture is often discussed within the context of micro-cultures. Micro-cultures refer to smaller groups within a larger cultural group, each with their own language, behaviour rules, and expectations.

*Diversity:* Real or perceived differences among people with regard to characteristics that affect their treatment, opportunities, and outcomes. Differences may be readily apparent, strong sources of personal identity, and associated with power or dominance relations between groups (Bell, 2009; Dobbs, 1996; Konrad, 2003). Beyond race or ethnicity, diversity also means variety in behaviors and values as suggested by immigration status, religion, language, region, family composition, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, physical and mental ability and more.

*Ethnorelativism:* The experience of one’s own beliefs and behaviors as just one organization of reality among many viable possibilities (Bennett, 2004).

*Higher education:* Educational programs within level 6 (bachelor or equivalent), 7 (master or equivalent), and 8 (doctoral or equivalent) as defined by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012). Higher education may include programs within colleges, universities, or various institutes.

*Intercultural Competence (ICC):* The capability to accurately understand and adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonality (Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman, 2003). As a teaching practice, ICC is “an attempt to raise students’ awareness of their own culture and, in so doing, help them to interpret and understand other cultures” (Rose, 2003).

*Multiculturalism:* The coexistence of diverse cultures, where culture includes racial, religious, or cultural groups and is manifested in customary behaviours, cultural assumptions and values, patterns of thinking, and communicative styles. Groups may include national minorities, immigrant minorities, migrant workers, or persons seeking asylum (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 2020).

## Methodology

Several procedures were followed to ensure a quality review of literature about pedagogy which fosters ICC among undergraduate students. These procedures included (1) a search of academic databases based on key terms, (2) a review of the reference section of each article for further materials, and (3) an examination of articles for specific topics of interest.

First, a comprehensive search of peer-reviewed journals was completed based on key terms: intercultural competence, higher education, diversity, reflection, coaching, mentoring, multiculturalism, and others. Investigators were looking for research-based evidence for the effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies that might be incorporated into almost any academic subject or discipline. The peer-reviewed journals were located through academic library databases, including EBSCOHost, Academic Search Premier, WorldCat, and Google Scholar. The search was narrowed to avoid reports, books, or conference presentations.

Second, a search of the reference sections of each article suggested additional related articles that might be insightful. These additional articles were examined and included in step three.

Third, the research team established topics of interest and examined the articles for lessons related to the importance of the problem, sampling procedures, research findings, specific teaching methods, evidence for effectiveness of teaching methods across academic disciplines, and limitations. Specific teaching methods were grouped by themes (e.g., knowledge, experience, coaching, and reflection).

The search process uncovered 278 peer-reviewed articles published from 1990 to 2020. As articles were reviewed, they were collected in Zotero, a free, open-source research tool that helped investigators collect, organize, analyze, and share research. Zotero includes reference manager software to store author, title, and publication fields; to organize, tag, and search; and to export that information formatted in a variety of academic styles.

Peer-reviewed articles were located which reported on research conducted within a single course face-to-face (Colvin-Burque, Zugazaga, and Davis-Maye, 2007; Denton, Esparza, Fike, and Gonzalez 2018), within a single course online (Ertmer et al. 2011), across an entire program (Cuellar, Brennan, Vito, and Siantz, 2008), and university-wide (Fabriegas Janeiro, Lopez Fabre, and Nuño, 2014). Scholars also reported on studies focused on specific academic disciplines and professional preparation programs:

medicine, nursing, dental hygiene, engineering, pharmaceuticals, business, teacher education, physical education, social work, and more.

Scholarly research reports were based on various measurements, among them the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) (Hammer, 2008); the Quick-Racial and Ethical Sensitivity Test (Quick-REST) (Brabeck et al. 2000); the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) (Kelly and Meyers, 2007); the Inventory for Assessing the Process of Cultural Competence- Student Version (IAPCCSV) (Campinha-Bacote, 2015); Knowledge, Efficacy and Practices Instrument (KEPI) (Garvan, Garvan, and Behar-Horenstein, 2016); My Cultural Awareness Profile (MyCAP) (Marx & Moss, 2011; Spitzer, 2015); and the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) (Pennebaker et al. 2007).

### **Results of Literature Review**

The study reported herein was searching for teaching and learning strategies which are thought enhance ICC among undergraduate students in a higher education setting. Effective educational experiences must use a “multifaceted training approach that includes cognitive, affective, and consciousness-raising activities” (Dickson, Jepsen, and Barbee, 2008). This report organizes the findings according to four themes based on categories described by Darling-Hammond et al. (2005). They suggested that impactful teaching and learning experiences would include elements of knowledge, experience, coaching, and reflection.

#### *Theme 1 Knowledge*

Higher education institutions are foremost focused on imparting knowledge among communities. Naturally, faculty will begin with sharing information about various cultural groups in a multicultural society. However, students must also learn to examine their own cultural knowledge, values, and beliefs to enhance their ICC. Otherwise, students' perceptions may limit their openness to work with other cultures (Sanner. 2010).

One resource for learning about cultural communication and connection is the ABC Model (Schmidt and Finkbeiner, 2006), They proposed five steps: (a) autobiography, (b) biography, (c) cross-cultural analysis and appreciation of differences, (d) cultural self-analyses of differences, and (e) plans for home-school connections. Brooks et al. (2015) applied this model to a qualitative multiple-case study to explore and describe the development of ICC among preservice teachers. Findings revealed that students articulated their own cultural values and beliefs,

learned about cultures different from their own, and identified effective strategies for developing relationships with future students, co-workers, and school administrators. This study has practical implications for educators seeking an effective framework in which to develop ICC among undergraduates.

One well-documented strategy that can assist students from majority cultures in working through biases and privilege is an interview. Such an interview includes prepared questions about topics such as stereotypes or personal development with regard to reference groups (Carter 2003). With an emphasis on understanding cultural similarities and differences, the interview as a teaching and learning strategy may be adapted and customized for almost any professional preparation program in higher education.

Other ideas to learn about similarities and differences of cultures other than those of the students: digital video or audio recordings; class presentations by individuals or panels; historical information from those on the “other side” of cultural issues; reading texts and essays; traditional lecture with visual aids; learning new vocabulary; and research in the library.

### *Theme 2 Experience*

Study abroad is often suggested as a way to gain cross-cultural experience. However, Soria and Troisi (2014) suggested that students’ participation in “internationalization at home” can have higher rates of student engagement and yield even greater benefits compared with study abroad. Spitzer (2015) concluded that students who complete a multicultural course experience do grow in their cross-cultural awareness and competence.

Cultural diversity within a class group does not automatically lead to actual student engagement in intercultural collaboration. Group members may find the experience more like toddlers playing in a sandbox. They find themselves in the same spaces but they are playing different games! Vickers, McCarthy, and Zammit (2017) explored the effects of intercultural peer mentoring on participating mentors, particularly noting the increase in their intercultural understanding and willingness to interact with students who are unlike themselves.

Yan and FitzPatrick (2016) described an intercultural peer education program which matches domestic students with international students in health-related fields. Such programs can take advantage of the increasingly culturally diverse student populations on many higher education campuses. Although there may be challenges, peer education can integrate health promotion knowledge and skills into

real-life practice and facilitate communication between international and domestic students.

Problem-based learning (PBL) is another method that combines learning knowledge with practicing skills while enhancing attitudes (Albanese and Mitchell 1993). In this constructivist approach, professional problems are presented through a scenario that motivates students to get involved in a solution (Edens 2000) by probing for a deeper understanding of the concepts (Duch, 2001). This approach was actually formalized in the 1950s to align traditional classroom problem-solving approaches with field-based practice (Woods 1994). PBL has been used in various professional schools with positive results (Allen, Donham, and Bernhardt 2011; Altshuler and Bosch 2003; Amador, Miles, and Peters 2006; Wong and Lam 2007).

Intercultural group work (IGW) is a promising learning strategy to enable university students to benefit from diversity among their peers (Poort, Jansen, and Hofman 2019). Poort's focus groups identified costs of participating in IGW: time, effort, negative psychological states, and compromising personal values. However, benefits identified included relationship attainment, intrinsic values, and usefulness.

Other ideas to provide personal and group experience with cultures other than those of the students: participating in role-plays or simulations, such as BaFa' BaFa' (Shirts 1974), Barnnga (Thiagarajan and Thiagarajan 1990), Albatross (see Cruz and Patterson 2005), Mau (see Sapp and Mullins 2020); demonstration and involvement in cultural practices; time with a cultural "buddy" or in a new service setting; tutoring peers in a new language or skill; or interview games, such as LifeStories (FNDI 1992).

### *Theme 3 Coaching*

Coaching is exactly what faculty members do. The International Coach Federation (2020) defines coaching as "Partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential." This definition was used for this investigation because faculty relationships with university students are typically for periods of six months to three years.

Hammer (2019) developed a customized coaching process based on the Intercultural Development Inventory, which, in turn, was based on the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett 1986). Known as the IDI Intercultural Development Plan (IDP), the process systematically increases

one's ICC. After completing the suggested activities in the IDP, most students increase skills in shifting cultural perspective and adapting behavior. Faculty members have incorporated the IDP into campus-based courses (Hermanson 2018), entire programs (Allen, Hancock, Lewis, and Starker-Glass 2017; Downey et al. 2006; Echeverri, Brookover, and Kennedy 2010), entire campuses (Fabregas Janeiro, Lopez Fabre, and Nuño 2014; McClinton and Schaub 2017), as well as international field experiences (Alfari and Quezada 2010; Pedersen 2009; Scott reported by Reyes-Vega 2020), with positive results.

At the Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla in Mexico (UPAEP University), leaders established an Intercultural Competency Certificate (CCI in Spanish) designed to develop students' ICC. Each student was assigned an "Intercultural Competence Coach." This coach guided the student during their intercultural development process. The coach worked with the students to identify personal goals and assisted them in reflecting about cultural differences. The coaching conversations were based on the Intercultural Development Inventory evaluation. The coaching could be conducted in person, by videoconference or by other electronic media (Fabregas Janeiro, Lopez Fabre, and Nuño 2014).

Other ideas for coaching students on their intercultural journeys: prompts to generate reflection or discussion about cultural similarities and differences; suggestions about the actual meaning of different practices among persons in the other culture; or providing graphic organizers (worksheets) for students to organize their notes as they listen to presentations.

#### *Theme 4 Reflection*

Reflection fosters ICC as well as enhances academic achievement. Maclean, Harvey, and Chia (2012) defined reflection as "the capacity ... to reflect further and refine understandings in response to events and the consequences of actions taken." Lyubovnikova, Napiersky, and Vlachopoulos (2015) examined the relationship of task reflexivity on MBA students' ICC and academic achievement. Their findings suggest that, in an intercultural learning environment, intercultural sensitivity fully mediated the relationship between task reflexivity and MBA student academic performance. They reported that students were able to experience the positive effects of diversity in their peer group for their own learning and performance.

Reflection may be combined with other activities in order to foster deeper student learning. Classroom activities to foster ICC might involve students' writing

about personal experiences that are related to their own cultural group and comparisons with other cultural groups.

One type of reflection process providing a bridge between theory and practice includes the use of case studies, storyline narratives, biographies or autobiographies (Bleicher 2011; He and Cooper 2009). Such narratives enable students to “develop a deeper understanding of and connection with multicultural and diversity issues” (Kang and Hyatt 2010). Students are better able to tell the story of their experiences through their own eyes.

Other ideas to foster reflection: comments in portfolio collections of learning products; responses to writing prompts or digital recordings of subject-related cultural challenges; free-writing; reflections about personal characteristics, growth patterns, or case studies; responding to field observations; and creating poetry.

## **Discussion and recommendations**

This question guided our study: What teaching and learning strategies might enhance ICC among undergraduate students at a university? The literature review reported here found scholarly investigations with support for four themes based on categories described by Darling-Hammond et al. (2005): knowledge, experience, coaching, and reflection. This section will describe several curricular ideas that incorporate all four categories: cultural autobiography, diversity stories, cultural partnership, and service learning.

### **Cultural Autobiography**

Awareness of one’s own culture provides a foundation to understanding others from different cultures (Spitzer 2015). And writing a Cultural Autobiography is a way to build understanding, awareness, and strength in one’s own culture. The idea of students developing their own Cultural Autobiographies is supported by Bersh (2018), Günay (2016), Hollinsworth (2013), and Gunn et al. (2013).

Cultural Autobiography is a longer-term project that encompasses several interactions, activities, and reflections. The assignment incorporates learning about micro-cultures (knowledge), an interview (knowledge), interactions with class members and presenters (experiences), and an essay (reflection). Each student should interview an “elder” from their family and write the elder’s answers to

questions about their own cultural heritage. (For purposes of this assignment, an elder is defined as any family member who is older than the student and who has some knowledge of the family's history and culture.)

The entire experience could be customized according to the course subject matter, the academic major, or the professional preparation program. The assignment might be customized to address topics such as: ethnicity and race; class and socioeconomic status; gender; sexual orientation; exceptionalities; language; religion; geography and region; age and generation. Other topics might include history and traditions; education values; military service; naming traditions; communication norms and behaviors; etc.

The Cultural Autobiography assignment may be completed in one of several genres: a story format, as an academic research paper, poetry, radio play, a graphic novel, or something else. Regardless of which genre is selected, students should describe their own background with rich detail. The work product may become part of one's professional autobiography, used later to apply for internships, employment, or graduate school. The Cultural Autobiography summarizes and synthesizes what is known about one's own cultural heritage and how involved one is in one's own micro-cultures. Reflection allows deeper thought about one's family and culture and one's fit into the broader cultural picture. Reflection gives meaning so students can examine values and how their outlooks might have developed by actual lived experiences.

### **Diversity Stories**

Beyond race or ethnicity, diversity also means variety in behaviors and values as suggested by immigration status, religion, language, region, family composition, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, physical and mental ability and more. Each person has a Diversity Story, even those who are members of a dominant culture.

Each person has unique elements or micro-cultures which influence values, norms, and behaviors. Each person has their own lived experiences and special capabilities (Goodwin 1997).

With Diversity Stories, instructors and other facilitators can provide an example in themselves of how to be open about their multicultural identities, attitudes, values, and beliefs. If the instructor and/or small group facilitator is of the majority ethnic group, it may be helpful to use self-disclosure in admitting to

holding biases against others as well as the ways in which he or she benefits from the privilege of the dominant culture. Experts assert that Diversity Stories can be especially effective for developing the competencies involving awareness of values, biases, attitudes and beliefs (Arredondo and Arciniega 2001),

For a class Diversity Story assignment, students make presentations to the group so all can be more understanding about the micro-cultures important to their lives. The purposes and the reflection questions for this assignment could be customized according to the course subject matter, the academic major, or the professional preparation program.

### Cultural Partnership

The Cultural Partnership, sometimes called a cultural “buddy,” is a way to build cross-cultural understanding and awareness (Campbell 2012; Downey et al. 2006; Gareis, Goldman, and Merkin 2019; Stough-Hunter, Guinan, and Hart 2016). This is a longer-term project that encompasses several interactions, activities, and reflections. Possible partner matches include native-born students with foreign-born students or native language students with second language learners. A connection with a person unlike the student should promote changes in understanding (Behar-Horenstein, Feng, Isaac, and Lee 2017). In a partnership, there should be benefits for those on both sides of the relationship.

In this case, both partners make new friends. The domestic student learns about another culture. The newcomer learns more about domestic culture.

The Cultural Partnership assignment incorporates an interview (knowledge), interactions (experiences), and an essay (reflection). The purposes, interview and reflection questions, and the experiences could be customized according to the course subject matter, the academic major, or the professional preparation program. Reflection allows deeper thought about the Cultural Partnership experience and its fit into the broader cultural picture. Reflection gives meaning so students can examine their values and how their outlook might have been changed by the Cultural Partnership experiences.

### Service Learning

Service Learning may be broadly defined as learning through active participation in thoughtfully organized community service projects that are

integrated into the academic curriculum (Hellenbrandt and Varona, 1992). Such efforts enrich the student learning experiences, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities. They also may be incorporated into courses and programs designed to enhance students' ICC.

In promoting ICC, faculty and instructors may design targeted culture-based internships, which expose students to diverse organizations and the mentorship of leaders from diverse backgrounds (Lopez-Littleton and Blessett 2015). In a partnership, there should be benefits for those on both sides of the relationship. In this case, both partners achieve something. The student learns about another culture and the projects in the community-based organization. The organization gets some support to carry out their projects.

Borden (2007) reported a significant decrease in ethnocentrism among students in an intercultural communication course from the beginning to the end of the semester. Analysis of students' written reflections about their service experiences reinforced the investigator's conclusion that service learning played a part in reducing ethnocentrism. Cupelli (2016) found that a service-learning based opportunity was effective in achieving the desired student learning outcomes of a cross-cultural assessment, effective communication, empathy, and recognition of clients' cultural needs into nursing practice.

Sandell (2018) described a Service Learning assignment for one specific undergraduate course as eighteen hours completed at one cooperating agency with adults from a culture that is new and/or challenging to the student. The learning strategy included an interview with an organization representative and a reflection paper about the experiences. The researchers observed statistically significant positive results based on changes in intercultural sensitivity measured by the IDI (Hammer 2003).

## **Conclusion**

Throughout the world, populations of many countries are rapidly becoming more diverse than ever. Population composition is changing, whether measured by ethnicity or race, age or generation, immigration status, or internal displacement. Higher education institutions have an important role in preparing university graduates to interact with diverse groups. This focus guided our study: What teaching and learning strategies might enhance intercultural competence (ICC) among undergraduate students at a university? Investigators wanted to collect a set

of teaching and learning activities to foster student growth through knowledge, experience, reflection, and coaching.

The study herein reported evidence from academic literature about intensive, intentional, and reflective cross-cultural educational experiences that could have a positive impact on the ICC of undergraduate students. Impactful teaching and learning experiences include elements of knowledge, experience, coaching, and reflection. The author suggested specific teaching and learning activities that combine all four elements and may be customized to enhance almost any academic or professional preparation program: cultural autobiography, diversity stories, cultural partnership, and service learning.

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## TIME TRAVEL AND CHINGHIZ AITMATOV: EXPLORING THE RIGOURS OF MULTICULTURAL READING

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### ABSTRACT

At a time when the entire world seemed to be opening up for me in the 1980s, I was invited to endless “drinks dos” across London. On two occasions, I had the chance to meet a famous Kyrgyz author named Chinghiz Aitmatov, and although the opportunity to engage with him at length never fully arose, I went on to read his novels and learnt to vigorously applaud his strangely poignant imagination on a wide variety of textual levels. Indeed, it is something of a dystopian nightmare that our “youth of today” proactively shies away from Text in order to embrace the merely optical. Hence, with hindsight, by way of scrutinising his literary habits and feeling compelled to sit in the seat of my imaginary time machine, I would seek to quiz him about the reasons “Why anybody should read anything?” All in all, I suspect, a Central Asian bard of Aitmatov’s stature would have suggested that apart from liberating our intelligence century-by-century from outmoded prejudices, and stretching personal brain capacity into a new-born range of empathies, the art of reading unfolds those eminently rare, but essential, hours of multicultural genius, thereby, so to speak, opening another exotic eye upon the world.

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## Introduction

In ancient Eurasia, the Angel of Destiny was said to hide unexpected gifts in our future. Indeed, this was one of the reasons I called my first serious conceptualist dramatisation “Fate’s Good Fortune”. An edgy script still needing to see the light of an actual, physical, staging, due to the fact I present Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev posthumously encountering a black woman, the Sybil, on the other side of his grave. A setting, obviously, some find uncomfortable from the very outset. Contextualised so, this scenario was not inspired by either my numerous visits to Baku, or for that matter, my love of Kyrgyzstan. Rather, it sprang into being years beforehand when I moved to London from Fareham in Hampshire. A time when the entire world seemed to be opening up for me and I was invited to endless “drinks dos” across the city as an ambitious young British poet. Recalled further, one such event was to be held by some Russian friends in an exceedingly fashionable neighbourhood. A datum my treasured associates interwove with their invitation, along with the certainty I would have the chance to meet a famous Kyrgyz author named Chinghiz Aitmatov (1928–2008).

Cryptically adding, if I recall correctly, he “was a man I should want to meet”. Now, as the cherubim will have it, I could not attend this particular event and asked them if the author was going to be present at any other “function”; a term commonly used in that long lost epoch of fundamental cultural transition currently known as the 1980s. Overall, their response proved puzzling, even though I was told he would be at another gathering relatively soon. A “bash” I was equally welcome to attend, although meeting him face-to-face would prove a little more difficult, because it would be a much more formal occasion. Anyway, I turned up at this second jamboree with a wild expectancy; an excitation which was only partially fulfilled. After all, there was a man stood in the far corner of a room whom people said was Aitmatov. What is more, he looked like Aitmatov from a distance and matched every single description of the author I had ever been given. Yet, I could not get any closer. All meaning, I have never really been sure whether I encountered the great writer, or not! However, be it that way or this, I went on to read his novels and learnt to vigorously applaud Aitmatov’s strangely poignant imagination on a wide variety of textual levels.

With hindsight, the main question I was going to quiz him about was “Why should anybody read anything?” Certainly, when everything has been spent and spoken, it is something of a dystopian nightmare that our “youth of today” proactively shies away from Text in order to embrace the merely optical. Clearly then, it is Manga instead of Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) that governs their

fantasies. A depressing verity both here in Britain, as well as across Central Asia. A phenomenon, moreover, boding somewhat badly for general literacy, as well as multicultural thinking. Well, all of the above confessed, it remains vital to remember that printed books have never simply been limited to instructional manuals, textbooks, resources for homework, or explanations of economic theory. Indisputably, they have unendingly been aligned to mystical pleasures, transcendent beauty, ancient folklore and culturally significant history. Exemplified, as this is, by fabled leather-bound volumes of spells consulted by wizards in cartoon comics: all the way to genuinely alchemical texts in a philosophical novelist's well-crafted satire, through to the conjuration of an entire world in Shakespearean theatre scripts.

Each in itself, evidencing that the published page has perennially exerted a revolutionary influence over entire societies. Also demonstrating, if any further illustration be necessary, that physical texts are infinitely more than convenient linguistic storage systems, a cheap form of entertainment, or a two-for-one birthday gift near the check-out in a local supermarket. Plainly, a book (when it proves worthy of this title), evokes the nascent luxury of discovering uncannily obscured personal dreams, along with previously hidden vectors inside our expansive Selves. And all within a sumptuous object discernible as an investment, on the one hand, as well as a collectable artefact, on the other. Possibly being some of the reasons why Gustave Flaubert scribbled, "Do not read, as children do, to amuse yourself, or like the ambitious, for the purpose of instruction. No, read in order to live";<sup>1</sup> a sentiment with which Aitmatov would have completely concurred. Sympathised thusly, reading is akin to other aesthetic elations. It is the opening of another exotic eye, so to speak, besides being the empowerment offered by an extra brain. Hence, connoisseurs have long argued that reading permits us to participate in the Sacred. Partly deciphering, perhaps, why bejewelled editions of the Holy Koran, or our Blessed Bible, have themselves become invested with powers and portents of their own!

### The significance of research

Some shallow critics, this demonstrated, seem to question the act of reading altogether. Instead, somewhat abnormally, of realising every book is a delectable papier-privilege, they publically pride themselves (as unmistakable textual virgins) on their ignorant naivety. Simultaneously trumpeting their lack of sophistication and erudition as though such failings were a type of streetwise virtue. For people like these, the whole idea of reading a book as collaboration with life-transforming

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<sup>1</sup> J. C. Tarver, *Gustave Flaubert as Seen in His Works and Correspondence* (Westminster, 1895), pp. 233–234.

concepts, or as an ally to other adventurers in parallel textual worlds, is simply incomprehensible. Alternatively, they prefer to abandon the heady gestalt of authors such as Chaucer, Voltaire, Lawrence Sterne, Darwin, Sir Richard Francis Burton, Thomas Manning, Rabindranath Tagore, Jonathan Swift and Charles Dickens, in order to wallow inside their own reductive sphere. Analogous, many would say, to someone who enjoys the narrow confines of a prison cell, while refusing to look through their iron-barred windows at the Elysian Fields beyond! These truly inadequate interlocutors, therefore, refuse to regard literature respectfully. Furthermore, precisely because they find the prospect of reading so personally off-putting, these self-styled advocates of immediate gratification remain unable to raise their spirits through ecstatic eloquence, blissful rhyme, or even the clever intricacies of meagre wordplay. Eventually discovering, the above recorded, that they are far beneath the rudimentary skill-sets demanded by prevalent social intercourse.

Contrarily, at the other end of this dialectical spectrum, stand Russian-speaking Central Asians like Aitmatov. A man who grew up encompassed by works of global literature, along with the ageless poetry of his nation. So remembered, on the plane of elementary history, my wonderful colleague was born to a Kyrgyz father and Tatar mother; each of whom worked as civil servants in Sheker. A profession, oddly, forcing his father to officially deny accusations of “bourgeois nationalism” when push finally came to political shove. Charges, this recollected, seemingly motivated by governmental paranoia, as well as Aitmatov senior’s fascination with received cultural praxis. Regrettably then, following this gross injustice, Aitmatov’s father was arrested, and later executed in secret; somewhen around 1938. Anyhow, his son, thankfully, appeared irrepressible and eventually became an integral member of the legendary post-war generation of Russian-language writers. An improbable attainment if one is mindful that Chinghiz Aitmatov’s own output before his novel *Jamila* was not particularly impressive. Undeniably, it only consisted of a few stories and a short novella called *Face to Face*. Nevertheless, *Jamila* unarguably evinced the author’s literary worth, because its rich narrative tells an outstanding tale of universally recognisable romance. A recitation (seen through the eyes of an adolescent boy), of how Jamila, a village girl separated from her soldier husband by the Second World War, falls in love with a tragically disabled soldier staying in her village. Every and each misadventure played out against the age-old diegesis of gathering and transporting life-sustaining grain crops to adjacent markets. Other novels of visceral account include, *Farewell, Gulsary!*; *The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years*; *The White Ship*; and *The Scaffold*: albeit always measured against the enduring success of this epic. So, despite severe initial turbulence, Chinghiz Aitmatov was awarded the Lenin Prize in 1963 for his *Tales of*

*the Mountains and Steppes*, whilst Aitmatov's artistry gained international recognition among layman and specialists alike during the years ahead.

### Chinghiz Aitmatov's works as a gift of fate

Interestingly, Aitmatov's oeuvre appears to embody some elements unique to his personal creative processes. Critics frequently observing that his work draws heavily on regional folklore, but not in the traditional sense. Rather, somewhat cunningly, they unravel Aitmatov's remoulding and reinvention of inherited oral diatribe (within the boundaries of modern life) as a stylistic feature running throughout his corpus. By the same token, these pundits postulate that in nearly every parable, Aitmatov interweaves universal myth, or a well-known fairy tale, with mundane phenomenologies as a telling touchstone for his accounts. For instance, one may descry in *The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years* Aitmatov's masterful grasp of a Kyrgyz fabulism chronicling a young captive turned into a "mankurt" (an unthinking slave); all serving as a calamitous allegory about our drear human condition. Each literary metamorphosis escorted by a second aspect of Aitmatov's writing easily discovered through his intimacy with the animal kingdom.<sup>2</sup> An ecological stance far ahead of his day, whilst inseparably connecting Aitmatov's chirography to the development of new "transpersonal paradigms" in prose. Wherefore, as he explained in one of his innumerable interviews, these concerns entailed descriptive circumstances in English, as much as Russian and his native Kyrgyz, regarding an issue largely ignored across our globe.<sup>3</sup> A confession assisting scholars to apprehend why his early jottings were mostly composed in Kyrgyz; some later being translated into Russian by his own hand, whereas others were translated into the English language by a small army of unknown translators.

To scrutinise his literary habits further, Aitmatov lived during a period when Kyrgyzstan was transforming from one of the most remote lands in the Russian Empire into a republic of the USSR. Explicating why, no doubt, this future author and diplomat had previously studied at a Soviet school in Sheker, as well as the biographical evidences detailing the juvenile Aitmatov working from an unusually early age. By fourteen, he was an assistant to the Secretary of his Village Soviet.

<sup>2</sup> G. T. Çetin, 'An Animal-Standpoint Reading of Farewell Gul'sary by Chingiz Aitmatov', *Firat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 30 (2020), pp. 29–39.

<sup>3</sup> I. Melnikova, 'Ирина Мельникова: Работу над сборником Айтматова считаю подарком судьбы' ('Irina Melnikova: I view the opportunity to work on Aitmatov's Collected Works as a gift of fate'), *Вечерний Бишкек* (Evening Bishkek), 27 May 2015, [https://www.vb.kg/doc/314306\\_irina\\_melnikova\\_raboty\\_nad\\_sbornikom\\_aytmatova\\_schitau\\_podarkom\\_sydby.html](https://www.vb.kg/doc/314306_irina_melnikova_raboty_nad_sbornikom_aytmatova_schitau_podarkom_sydby.html) (Accessed 12 October 2020)

Following this appointment, he held down jobs as a loader, tax collector, and engineer's assistant, while experimenting with many other types of employment as he matured. Relatedly, by 1946, Aitmatov began studying at the Animal Husbandry Division of the Kirghiz Agricultural Institute in Frunze, but shortly afterwards switched to literary studies at the Maxim Gorky Literature Institute in Moscow. A city he called home between 1956 and 1958. Thereafter, (for eight years approximately) he worked for the newspaper *Pravda* before examining his professional options. Curiously, Aitmatov's own Russian-language projects first appeared in print as early as 1952. Echoing, presumably, a comprehensive process of lexical blossoming immediately spotted by his admirers in volumes like "The Newspaper Boy Dziuiio" and "АШЫМ". Still, his initial publication in Kyrgyz entitled *White Rain*, along with his well-known saga *Jamila* adorned popular bookshelves by 1958. Predictably then, by 1961 he was propelled into becoming a juror at the second Moscow International Film Festival, whereas 1971 saw Aitmatov climbing the ladder of literary recognition as a juror for the seventh Moscow International Film Festival. Ascending again, 1994 found Aitmatov on the jury of the 44th Berlin International Film Festival. A far from insignificant achievement bearing in mind previous Cold War anxieties. Finally, by 2002, he was recognised as the judicial President at the 24th Moscow International Film Festival. Obviously, a suggestive post due to reminiscences that film had once been seen as largely "decadent" and requiring a nod of assent from the literati in order to attain its just, as well as rightful, place at this supernal table.

Observed so, we all have our Existence in fatefully calculated time, whether we stride the planetary stage as literary giants, or unambiguously persist as innocent tradesfolk. Hereafter, following years of minor ailments, Aitmatov suffered kidney failure; being admitted on 16th May 2008 to a hospital in Nuremberg, Germany, where he died of pneumonia on 10th June at the age of 79. After his passing, Aitmatov's body was flown to Kyrgyzstan, wherein a number of national civic formalities marked his demise, before a full ceremonial burial in the Ata Beyit cemetery. A location, in all likelihood, where his father was also laid to rest. Demonstrably, the above pondered, Chinghiz Aitmatov's obituary was published in *The New York Times* as a testament to tensions that post-Cold War manias could only permit a grudging eulogy, which declared him, "a Communist writer whose novels and plays before the collapse of the Soviet Union gave a voice to the people of the remote Soviet republic of Kyrgyz", adding that Aitmatov "later became a friend, diplomat and adviser to the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> B. Weber, 'Chingiz Aitmatov, Who Wrote of Life in U.S.S.R., Is Dead at 79', *The New York Times*, 15 June 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/15/books/15aitmatov.html?ref=obituaries> (accessed 09 October 2020).

Henceforth, sitting in the seat of my imaginary time machine, I will now ask him the questions I had intended to say on that fateful evening way back in the 1980s in a manner remindful of Louis Aragon. A delightful conceit, beginning with what he thought reading actually was in reality.<sup>5</sup> Already then, in my mind's third eyeball, I can glimpse dawn and dusk reversing like the flapping wings of a great bird. Until, this settled, I can clearly hear him replying that reading is a complex "cognitive process" of decoding symbols in order to derive, or construct, "meaning" (ordinarily defined as "comprehension" in educationalist circles) and "value". Staggeringly, an answer like this would imply reading is intersubjective, albeit transparent, self-directed, communication. Contrastingly, it can equally lead to informational exchange, language acquisition, and the sharing of ideas: let alone a foreshadowing of aesthetic and proportional notions in apportioned terms. Understood thuswise, linguistic semiosis is typically, as well as "ironically", visual (printed, or written), besides being tactile when transcribed into Braille. Thence, regardless of language specificity, reading is best envisaged as a sophisticated interaction betwixt Text, Culture, Society, and individual Readers. A continuum, dare one propose, moulded by a particular reader's experiences, prior knowledge, and psychological attitude towards the Absolute. In other words, it is both collectively objective, as well as subjectively focussed. All contentions implying the process of reading involves continuous practice and refinement. Atop of which, reading entails critical analysis and an honest creativity in its practitioners. Each consumer of literature venturing into a potential galaxy of metaphysical assignations with words, characters, phrases, plots and alien geographies, derived from those untrodden territories. Whenceforth, reading is such a complex process that it cannot be controlled, or restricted, to one or two putative interpretations. Consequently, at this juncture, I may have asked Aitmatov if (since there are no concrete laws of reading) these procedures allow a reader to escape the incarcerating sensorium around him, or her; and, thereafter, produce their own linguistic landscapes introspectively. An unsettling thought propounding that every reader will have her, or his, own *Jamila* in the depths of personal consciousness. One way or another, this theorised, every reader will inevitably employ an artillery of strategies in order to assist with the necessary decoding of these signs, marks and images. In this sense, contextual clues build patterns of rapport amid a reader and a text. Identifying, thereby, the importance of unknown values, or un-lived empiricisms. Beyond doubt, this is a sentient textual "interplay" linking subjective apprehensions to an already existing framework of knowledge, or agreed multicultural schema.

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<sup>5</sup> Nowadays, these questions would be adjoined to my personal thanks for inspiring me with the idea of "Theatrical Poetry". Indeed, without Aitmatov, my two collections of dramatised prose-poetry, *Caliban's Redemption* and *The Grammar of Witchcraft* would not have been written.

Stunned quite possibly at his reactions, my third question would have centred on the history of reading. An enterprise dating back to the invention of writing itself and, all things considered, a genuine miracle of human creativity taking place during the fourth millennium BC. Assuredly, Aitmatov knew reading printed text is now a commonplace for the majority. An accepted truism whereby everyone knows information is effortlessly accessed by a variety of means throughout our society. But, this is a recent step in Western cultural affairs. Ergo, it is indispensable to recall (with minor exceptions) that only an extremely small percentage of people in most European countries could be considered literate before the Industrial Revolution. A necessary clarification when considering so-called “pre-modern” cultures, which could boast of high literacy rates: precedents being unearthed in the case of Classical Athens, as well as the Islamic Caliphate. Palpably then, unlike creative writers, academicians assume these habituations were partially enhanced by “reading aloud” – a widespread activity back in antiquity, whilst reading silently to oneself was said to be infrequent. As an instance in focus, scholars tend to refer to *Confessions* by Saint Augustine, wherein he states Saint Ambrose’s personal custom was to read vociferously to himself.<sup>6</sup> Implying, of course, it was not until the Age of Enlightenment that “elite” citizens began to promote quiet, or passive, reading practices, rather than verbally articulated Text. Yet, even if this is admitted for the sake of argument, reading still has no guidelines. Contrariwise, it is a way to gain one’s own grip on intended information interiorly; a habit wherein deep explorations of Text become possible. Penned so, construction, or the creation of writing systems, along with the subsequent manufacture of linguistic “items”, was believed to be an indication of someone’s healthy participation in their surrounding society. An opinion sustaining bookshops to this haunted day. Nevertheless, in those bygone decades, readers were considered model citizens simply because they did not create an actual “product”. All proving, they were not dangerous political subversives, or literary crazies, looking for novelty and endless hedonism. Henceforth, reading was viewed as an obviously inferior art to writing, but one of singular importance to the essential structure of our cultural bonds. Weirdly, I can see Aitmatov listening intently to these cogitations, although unsure of the implications concealed behind this indistinct allegation. Yet then again, maybe I am watching him engrossed in pure speculation.

So detected, I would have reminded him that in eighteenth-century Europe, the (then new) delectation of reading alone in bed was thought to be immoral; if not actually hazardous. Reading, when all said and done, aroused one’s fancies and fleshly tastes. Accordingly, the moment reading became less of a diurnal occurrence

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<sup>6</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, (trans.) C. J.-B. Hammond (Cambridge, MA, 2014), p. 243.

and something more personally exclusive (a routine taking place inside individual bedrooms as opposed to dormitories, or familial sleeping areas), a sensibility of dread comparable to other menaces and indecencies begins. Back then, “experts” even went as far as stating this convention was akin to an unmanageable fire caused by bedside candles, or the problems posed by an unchaperoned spinster. Recollected thuswise, it can be intuited that reflexive multicultural critiques were patently focussed on a fear that readers – especially women – could escape their national and tribal obligations. Transgressing, thereby, “ethical boundaries” and losing themselves in an addictive fantasy world. Each scholarly analysis, peculiarly, indicating there are several modes, along with types, of reading. Moreover, once studied, anyone reflecting on this topic rapidly discovers that differing rates of processing information can be attained with regard to different kinds of materials; whether this leads to a private state of reverie, or otherwise. For example:

- *Speed reading* – is a collection of methods for increasing reading speed without an unacceptable reduction in comprehension, or individual retention.

- *Subvocalized reading* – combines sight-reading with the internal sounding of words; as if spoken aloud. Advocates of speed reading, however, claim it can be a bad habit in that it slows reading and comprehension down, whilst others indicate the reverse, particularly with abstruse types of text.

- *Incremental reading* – is a reading discipline designed for long-term memorisation. It means, after all, “reading in portions”.

- *Rereading* – is reading a text more than once and, as Vladimir Nabokov said, “It allows for a more profound emotional connection and self-reflection, versus the first reading which is more focused on the events and plot”.

- *Proofreading* – is a kind of reading for the purpose of detecting typographical errors. One can learn to do it relatively quickly, although professional proofers typically acquire this ability over extended periods of time.

On top of which, a number of readers take notes when they read. Thenceforth, some readers:

- *Survey-question-read-recite-review* – a methodology, often taught in colleges, whereby one is able to externalise material without having to refer to notes during a lecture.

- *Structure-proposition-evaluation* – a technique allowing readers to gauge the merits of an argument, or conclusion.
- *Rapid-serial-visual-presentation* – a system involving the presentation of words in a sentence (albeit one at a time), wherein a reader's eye movement is trained for an increased reading velocity.
- *Multiple (intelligences) focus* – a craft drawing upon a reader's diverse ways of thinking in order to enrich his, or her, appreciation of a text.

Everything above considered, reading processes are contexts of communication on either a superficial or depth scale, depending on one's intentionality. Inevitably, performing this act successfully in comfortable restaurants, private rooms, study areas, libraries, cafés, trains, or at bus stops, let alone in parks, or woodlands, ultimately depends on the available light source; along with the time of day. Something enhanced, or troublingly hindered, by the clarity of the printed word itself: whether written in ink, or inscribed in toner; as well as the quality of paper that words are printed upon. Besides, "transmissions" of information depend on the modus of "transference" – like a magazine, book, leaflet, notepad, newspaper, or electronic display. Nowadays, this appreciated, such devices as a television, mobile phone, and iPad, *et al*, further extend our opportunities for Text to be digested. Still, even though outlets for inscription are duly enlarged, handwritten text continues to be generated using a pen, or graphite pencil, at the same time as short texts can be engraved, painted, or written, on an object; along with the traditional medium of paper. Analogously, a text may be creatively associated with Art, while the calligraphy of an address on an envelope, or the semiotics of a street sign to traffic, or commercial packaging around a product, unveil subsidiary evolutions in our alphabets. Unquestionably, even political slogans painted on a wall can also convey multileveled meanings in similar ways to carefully arranged coloured stones on a beach.

Naturally, once pictured from this much wider perspective, the relevance of the Global Text Project becomes increasingly apparent for overtly deprived groups. Assessed so, this "not-for-profit" institute is magnanimously dedicated to the translation, printing, and distribution of free open-content textbooks throughout the Internet, as well as an overall understanding of Text-In-Itself. Strikingly, it is an open educational resources (OER) project concentrating on university students in "developing countries", where textbooks are normally expensive and literature is perceived as a total luxury. All making me wonder what Aitmatov's reaction would have been at this stage of our conversation; notwithstanding any mention being made of Abai Qunanbaiuly (1845–1904) as a potential counterpoint, or the resistance to reading witnessed outside our schools? So mused, textbooks remain a crucial

commodity for higher education, despite being increasingly hard to attain: even in “First World” economies like the United States. Undeniably, between 1998 and 2014 textbook prices rocketed by 161 per cent.<sup>7</sup> In addition, since 1977, handbook prices have risen by 1,041 per cent: more than triple the standard rate of American inflation.<sup>8</sup> Unacceptably then, the two major reasons lurking behind these outrageous costs are inapt publication practices, shepherded by the extra material bundled (unnecessarily) into “cutting-edge” monographs.<sup>9</sup> Each a factor explaining why this project relies heavily on volunteers. Quite apart from which, this organisation experienced a number of (direct) challenges regarding its engagement with unremunerated translators in languages other than Spanish. Resulting, the above noted, in volunteers being enrolled from among the ranks of graduate and college students who are already bilingual. Simultaneously, other volunteer-based enterprises, including established academic “communities” such as Translations without Borders and Translators for Progress have come to their aid, whilst the selection of a volume for translation is regularly a subject of heated debate. Yet, once a manual has been chosen for translation (a choice evaluated on global needs and the availability of translators), the work under scrutiny is allocated to a “virtual team” of exegetes. Oh my, I can only guess at Aitmatov’s utterances about a radical project of this sort! At any rate, by 2007 this humanitarian undertaking started to receive funds from the Jacobs Foundation of Switzerland. A financial advancement permitting it to relocate, as well as hold a pilot test run, for its monumentally ambitious plans. It goes without saying, of course, that the idea behind Global Text’s original intention was to share open-content textbooks in English, Chinese, Arabic, Russian and Spanish: each title freely available through their website. That being joyfully declared, their website presently sports over one hundred primers in English, even though the quantity of print editions in Chinese and Spanish still need to radically increase.

## Conclusion

Thereupon, my imaginal time machine must return to our present period, because, unforeseeably, we can clock the rub. Either, reading is destined to unfetter

<sup>7</sup> C. Straumsheim, ‘Triaging Textbook Costs’, *Inside Higher Ed*, 16 August 2015, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/08/04/era-400-college-textbook-affordability-initiatives-take-utilitarian-approach> (accessed 12 September 2020).

<sup>8</sup> B. Popken, ‘College Textbook Prices Have Risen 1,041 Percent Since 1977’, *NBC News*, 6 August 2015, <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/freshman-year/college-textbook-prices-have-risen-812-percent-1978-n399926> (accessed 12 September 2020).

<sup>9</sup> N. H. Nicholls, ‘The Investigation into the Rising Cost of Textbooks’, *Scholarly Publishing Office University of Michigan Library* (17 August 2015), <https://apps.lib.umich.edu/files/SPOTextbookBackground.pdf> (accessed 12 September 2020).

the human mind, or our collective psyche will continue to be pasty, weak, pallid, and grossly under-stimulated. Embodied, as these dismal conditions are, by the withered white flowers inside my pocket. So attested, reading is a pursuit marking this process as the true sorcery and enchantment of Text in a nutshell. A power enhanced, when all tallied and quantified, by the obvious veracity of those claimants contending that reading continues to be our best method of recognising the heart of a frequently heartless world. So, in addition to being the most straightforward means through which readers can enquire into the subtle activities of Soul, in a seemingly soulless world, reading proves essential to the extension of empirical self-awareness. Atop this, reading is the principal technique enabling literary art to enlarge spontaneous perception in anyone – at any time. Wherefore, reading is best seen as an authentically anagogical force of charged sentences, magnetised grammar, and galvanised paragraphs. Every one of them quickly translating into public enlightenment, multicultural justice, and humanitarian concern. In which case, I, buttressed by the great man of letters himself, commend this ageless custom to one-and-all. Answering, therein, my dolefully adrift question “why should anybody read anything?” with a robust retort. Provided, that admitted, I heard him correctly down the timeline. But, I digress. Visibly, a bard of Chinghiz Aitmatov’s stature would have finally concluded our conversation by turning towards me and saying that apart from liberating our intelligence century-by-century from outmoded prejudices, and stretching personal brain capacity into a new-born range of empathies, the art of reading unfolds those eminently rare, but essential, hours of intersubjective genius.

A factor never completely exhausted by our energised ancestors, or reduced to mere triviality between ourselves.


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## THE EFFECT OF BILINGUALISM ON EFL ELEMENTARY LEARNERS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION: THE CASE OF AZERI- TURKISH VS. PERSIAN STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

Since the phenomenon of bilingualism is gradually increasing in the world, the theory-driven and practically oriented investigation on bilingualism have increased recently. However, a few studies have been conducted on the effect of bilingualism on language learning in the multilingual and multicultural context of Iran. Therefore, the main aim of the present study is to examine the effect of bilingualism on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension in the case of Azeri-Turkish vs. Persian students. The study employed a quasi-experimental design over 8 weeks with 44 female students assigned to one of the two experimental groups. To select bilingual and monolingual groups, a biographical questionnaire was used. Then, Nelson elementary proficiency test was administered to ensure the homogeneity of the students. To fulfill the purpose of the study, 15 bilingual (Azeri-Persian) elementary students in Fazilat high school in Ramian and 29 monolingual (Persian) elementary students in Sama high school in Azadshahr were selected to participate in the present study. Each group received 16 sessions of treatment in listening skill. Then, the two groups' performance was compared on pretest and posttest consisting of a multiple-choice and matching listening comprehension test. The results indicated that there was no significant difference between the bilingual and monolingual groups regarding their performance on listening comprehension, that is, bilingualism did not affect listening comprehension.

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## Introduction

Bilingualism is a very general phenomenon all around the world and bilingual families exist very often in every society nowadays (Saunders, 1988). It is estimated that 5,000 different languages are spoken in around the world among 200 countries; therefore, communication among different citizens of different countries definitely leads to bilingualism or multilingualism and is an important fact all around the world nowadays. In fact, two-third of children all around the world born and grow up in bilingual conditions (Crystal, as cited in Bhatia & Ritchie, 2006). In this regard, Bialystok (2003) cited that languages, neighborhood, educational system, and the language which is spoken outside the home are the important issues in bilingualism. Since being in contact with some aspects of other languages is unavoidable and no language can protect itself from changing and entering new words and phrases from other languages, it is probably impossible for adults to be purely monolingual (Bialystok, 2003).

In addition, bilingualism has different degrees and can be evaluated in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening is one of the most primary factors to communicate. It is the act of decoding in which the listener decodes the speech as an auditory input in which the auditory input transforms into a mental reconstruction of the listener. Understanding the speaker's speech to adequate communication is important for a listener (Hulstijn & Heuven, 2003). A lot of studies have been conducted on the effect of bilingualism on learners' learning (e. g., Gorjian & Mahmoudi, 2012; Lambert, 1997; Lee & Kim, 2011; Samadi & Maghsoudi, 2013; Yamchi and Kumar, 2016). However, to the best of researcher's knowledge, no study has been conducted on the effect of bilingualism on EFL learners' listening comprehension among Iranian Azeri-Turkish and Persian students that is investigated in the present study.

According to the previous studies conducted on the role or the effect of bilingualism on language learning such as writing, reading comprehension, and pronunciation, bilingualism affects language learning (e. g., Bialystok & Chang, 2005; Gorjian & Mahmoudi, 2012; Merrikhi, 2012; Samadi & Maghsoudi, 2013). Even though a lot of studies have been conducted on bilingualism and listening comprehension, in Iranian context just Gorjian and Mahmoudi (2012) conducted a study on the role of bilingualism and monolingualism in listening comprehension of learning English as a foreign language among Arab-Persian bilinguals. Yamchi and Kumar (2016) also compared Iranian monolingual and bilingual university students' listening comprehension in terms of watching English movie with Latinized Persian subtitles. However, it seems that no study has been conducted on

how bilingualism affects EFL listening skill in Azeri Turkish-Persian junior high school students in Iran. Therefore, the purpose of this quasi-experimental study is to test the hypothesis about whether there is any significant effect of bilingualism between bilinguals (Azeri Turkish-Persian) and monolinguals (Persian) on listening comprehension. Therefore, in this study, an attempt was made to answer the following question:

*Does bilingualism have any significant effect on Iranian EFL elementary learners' listening comprehension?*

### **Bilingualism**

Language is exquisitely tied to memory and to the functions that encode and store information as well as to those assisting us in retrieving information (Heredia & Altarriba, 2013). According to Edwards' study (as cited in Bhatia & Ritchie, 2006), there seems to be nobody in the world who does not know at least some words in other languages except their mother tongue. Guagnano (2009) pointed out that although the concept of being bilingual often seems simple and non-ambiguous, it covers a vast classification of concepts each of which has a different emphasis. Bilingualism refers to a linguistic community in which two languages contact each other and so two codes can be used in the same interaction (Hamers & Blanc, 2004). According to the Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics a bilingual person is defined as the one who uses at least two languages with some degree of proficiency (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

These definitions, which are from a variety of native-like knowledge in two languages to a very small amount of proficiency in a second language, propose some theoretical and methodological problems. On the one hand, they lack the quality of being very exact and correct and operational (Hamers & Blanc, 2004). For instance, Mohanty (as cited in Hamers & Blanc, 2004) limited bilingualism to the social-communicative aspect and stated that bilingual persons or communities are those who can visit the needs of communication and the society in their usual performing in two or more languages in their conversation with other people.

For the bilingual person, the linguistic aspects of encoding and retrieval can occur in one or two languages (Schroeder & Marian, 2012) and the bilingual experience can positively and negatively affect various cognitive and linguistic processes, which, in turn, leads bilinguals to show enhanced memory in certain situations and impaired memory in other situations (Heredia & Altarriba, 2013).

Moreover, languages, neighborhood, educational system, and the language which is spoken outside the home are the important issues in bilingualism. There are some factors such as the age of acquisition, language transfer, cognitive and brain development, motivation, educational environments, and language exposure that make bilingualism and second language acquisition more complicated and extremely interesting than the first language acquisition (Ellis, 2005).

Age, as a moderating variable, has strong effects on the equality of first language acquisition with second language acquisition in phonology, lexicon, syntax, morphology, and pragmatics. Furthermore, these effects are different in one field from another (Ellis, 2005). On a very general consideration of bilingualism, age has a negative correlation between acquisition and level of achievement in the second language (L2). What is most rational is that there is a limited period to develop the second language acquisition to make native-like achievements and after that it is impossible. Despite this is an acceptable hypothesis because critical periods are seen in the process of growth of many groups, there is not much general agreement on relation to the critical period hypothesis (CPH) when it affects second language acquisition.

Nevertheless, Pavlenko (2005) stated bilingualism can be very useful and beneficial for improving linguistic knowledge of speakers and offering them understanding which is important for changeable and critical thinking. Further, they have greater cognitive flexibility (Paradis, 2005).

Evaluating the degree of bilingualism is a very eminent problem even for reasons other than research aims. Guagnano (2009) provided that to collect information about the age of acquisition and the language the bilinguals use in everyday life, the reported measures such as questionnaires and interviews are prosperous. Guagnano (2009) stated that to evaluate the linguistic proficiency objectively, there is a way to get this through observed measures. According to Guagnano (2009), observed measures involve both tests of competence in the first and second languages.

### **Listening Comprehension**

Listening comprehension is one of the most complex skills in language learning (Oxford, 1993), especially in the case of an unidirectional listening mode where the listener is unable to interact with the speaker as in the case of watching a movie to comprehend its content (Graham, 2006). Even though listening was a skill that had a common role (and still it has) in the language acquisition process, it

began to be taught as a separate skill of language from 1970 (Rost, as cited in Hulstijn & Heuven, 2003).). Since 1990, the listening skill has been considered as an important factor in foreign language teaching and speech understanding was the problem that was increasingly focused when anthropologists began to explain the oral languages of the world. (Bloomfield, as cited in Hulstijn & Heuven, 2003).

Moreover, listening is a very difficult skill to be mastered for students who have to understand a foreign language. One reason is that we learn the foreign language in the classroom in which we see words and sentences in a good organization on the board and when the teacher pronounces them slowly and clearly, we have enough time to recognize them. Another difficulty is that many teachers believe in a high-standard comprehension of how English is pronounced. In addition, different listeners take different aspects of a message (Hulstijn & Heuven, 2003).

Additionally, Davis and Osborn (2003) point out that the input which students receive has to be processed. It is especially very difficult and complex activity to lower and beginner learners. The lower-proficiency students cannot remember what is said and pre-listening activity can be useful for them. During the 1940s and 1950s, EFL teaching presumed that comprehension is a bottom-up model in which listeners start with recognizing phonetic sounds, phonemes, morphological structure and so on, finally to get a word. Then listeners do the same process to the next word, phrase, and sentence and so interpret the sentence semantically. Recently, it is proved that the bottom-up model is an insufficient one to complete comprehension. Listeners need some background to comprehend a text completely. A very important process of comprehension is the top-down model, in which listeners use the knowledge of topic and previous information about a topic. However, the problem of a foreign language learner is still at the level of phonetics (Brown, 1996).

Likely, to everyone who has learned a language as a foreign or second language is familiar with the difficulty of listening to the target language and unsuccessful trying to have a good and complete communication despite many years of practicing in the target language. Usually, learners know the meaning of the words when they are visible but they do not understand or recognize the words orally. The important reason of this miscommunication is the inability of listeners to distinguish the words spoken form. In addition, listeners likely have good vocabulary knowledge but they cannot be able to use this ability under the pressure of time. There is a familiar phenomenon to learners of a foreign language, that is, what to say and how before or after the conversation but not they are conversing. Additionally, learners might have acceptable knowledge about the vocabulary and

grammar to make correct sentences in answer to what the speaker has just said but they cannot be able to use their knowledge fast enough (Hulstijn & Heuven, 2003).

As a comprehension process, listening shares many important characteristics with reading (Bae & Bachman, 1998; Kintsch, 1998; Samuels, 1987). Both require receptive language processing, which involves decoding and interpretation. Both processes, therefore, use two basic knowledge sources: linguistic knowledge (e.g., vocabulary and syntax) and world knowledge (e.g., topic, text structure, schema, and culture) for purposes of text comprehension. Like reading, listening also entails top-down and bottom-up processing to apply these knowledge sources to the language input during comprehension.

According to Hulstijn and Heuven (2003), attaining the information of a language is a necessary step to using a foreign language fluently, but if it is restricted to knowledge allocation, learners are not able to be fluent users and are never able to be a near-native foreign language speaker. They also cited that understanding the oral language is more than matching the sounds and meanings and it includes four sub-processes of hearing or perception, classification of incoming sounds, word recognition, and comprehension. Additionally, Ellis in Hulstijn and Heuven (2003) stated that the word recognition refers to linguistic knowledge. So, the competence of the structure of the language is needed to the decoding of the syntactic relationship amid the words that make a sentence and are part of the linguistic knowledge of the listener.

The second sub-process of listening skill is the classification of incoming sounds. Speech sounds are different from point of view of phonetic aspects each of which probably depends on many aural cues (Hayward, Rietveld & van Heuven, as cited in Hulstijn & Heuven, 2003). The word recognition is the third sub-process of listening skill. In this process, the stream of sounds is separated into linguistic units such as morpheme and words. Then, the meanings are recovered from long term memory (Hulstijn & Heuven, 2003). Comprehension is the fourth sub-process of listening skill. When the speaker utters groups of sounds, they are classified into grammatical groups; then the relationship of words and meanings is demonstrated: the incoming information gets analyzed. Because of the existence of redundancy in communication, making the exact grammatical analysis to listeners is not necessary; furthermore, they explained that the speed of delivery and the existence of the limitation on the ability of a listener to processing makes it relatively impossible to build grammatical analyses in details. This process depends on the learner's competence.

## Models of Listening

Traditionally, listening was considered as a passive skill in which the listener gets input which is sent by the interlocutor. Listening was much seen as an active and explanatory function in which the message is produced between speakers and listeners. Context shapes the meanings and the listener constructs it through of explaining (Lynch & Mendelsohn, as cited in Nation & Newton, 2009). Additionally, two models of the listening process have been proposed, namely, Bottom-up Process and Top-down Process. The bottom-up process includes collecting the message part by part and from details to the whole by the listener. It contains understanding and analyzing the speech stream to the great extent larger levels starting with all features of languages in a sentence level and context (Field, as cited in Nation & Newton, 2009). On the other hand, gathering messages from whole to detail by the listener, that is, use pre-information and the related content and context is called top-down process. In this process, listeners use their knowledge about context to understand the message in the conversation, and they use some details of the message to revise and confirm. Note that, when we see these two processes together, we will see as one of the sub-skill. Possibly, the oral message can be understood by taking some keywords and points from context without pay attention to the grammar of the message. Or it can be said; understanding can take place without noticing (Swain, as cited in Nation & Newton, 2009). Hence, though paying attention to meaning in listening is important, but learners need to focus on details, therefore, listeners need to chances to notice details of a message so they may learn some unimportant details of language which are not essential to communication but are necessary to accuracy. Pay attention to meaning in listening particularly focuses on top-down approach (Nation & Newton, 2009).

Therefore, Lynch and Mendelsohn (as cited in Nation & Newton, 2009) explained in recent studies the main role of bottom-up functioning in second language listening. According to Tsui and Fullilove (as cited in Nation & Newton, 2009), listeners who are good at this skill outperformed from unskilled listeners to reply to the questions in which their answers were not in the content of the message. It means that the unskilled listeners to answer the questions were dependent on the content of the message.

## Recent Studies

Recently, there has been an increasing amount of literature on bilingualism and different skills (e.g. Bialystok & McBride-Chang, 2005; Calvo & Bialystok, 2013; Carlo, 2008; Gorjian & Mahmoudi, 2012; Lambert, 1997; Lee & Kim, 2011; Legac

(2007); Merrikhi, 2012; Najafisarem, 2009; Saffarian, Gorjian & Nejad Fazel, 2013; Samadi & Maghsoudi, 2013; Siegal, Iozzi & Surian, 2009; Tafaraji-Yeganeh, 2013; Yamchi & Kumar, 2016).

Lambert (1997) conducted a study in which the factors of age and socio-economic status have been controlled; it was found out that bilingualism does not have negative effects on cognition. In addition, they found out that balanced bilinguals were better than others in the forming of concept and mental capabilities.

Legac (2007) explored the listening comprehension in monolingual and bilingual primary school students of English as a foreign language. The participants of both groups had been equally exposed to English. They took a listening comprehension test from the Cambridge Preliminary English Test. The results of the study showed that bilingual students performed significantly better than monolingual students in listening comprehension test. A possible reason for the bilingual advantage was that their experience with two languages would reduce general foreign language anxiety and their listening anxiety in learning a new foreign language.

Gorjian and Mahmoudi (2012) studied the role of bilingualism and monolingualism in listening comprehension of learning English as a foreign language. The important aim of their study was to examine the effect of monolingualism and bilingualism on listening. They conducted an experimental study on two groups of Arab-Persian bilingual students and Persian monolingual students. Different testing instruments and listening comprehension strategies were employed during the development of the study and the results indicated that using those strategies by monolinguals and bilinguals had a positive effect on their listening comprehension. In addition, they found out that bilinguals outperformed the monolinguals in listening comprehension and their strategies which are used.

Samadi and Maghsoudi (2013) in a similar study investigated bilingual versus monolingual learners' reading comprehension ability regarding their interest in reading comprehension topics. They demonstrated that female bilinguals were better than female monolinguals in female based-text and female monolinguals outperformed male monolinguals in female based-texts. In addition, male monolinguals were better than female monolinguals in male based-texts; however, there were not any differences between male and female monolinguals in male-female based texts.

Tafaraji-Yeganeh (2013) investigated metacognitive listening strategies awareness among bilingual and monolingual Iranian university students learning English as a foreign language. She contended that the metacognitive listening

strategies among bilinguals are higher than monolinguals in general. She also stated that the degree of metacognitive awareness is affected by the number of languages known by the participants. On the other hand, Shabani and Najafisarem (2009) also investigated the relationship between bi/monolingual students' learning strategies. They found that there isn't any significant difference between two groups in their strategy use.

Saffarian, Gorjian and Nejad Fazel (2013) carried out several investigations into the effects of bilingualism and monolingualism on EFL learners' performance on reading comprehension Tests. They conducted an experimental study between two groups of Arab-Persian bilingual students and Persian monolingual students. Different test instruments were used during the development of the study in which the results demonstrated that using different strategies by bilingual students had an important and positive effect on their reading comprehension. Moreover, between bilingual and monolingual students was not an important difference regarding their acts on reading comprehension.

Merrickhi (2012) studied the effect of bilingualism on Iranian pre-university students' English grammar proficiency. This study conducted among three groups of Iranian pre-university female students: two composed of Azeri-Turkish bilinguals and Armenian bilinguals and the other of Persian monolinguals. Different test instruments were used during the study. She formed three homogeneous groups by using the Nelson test. After two months of training, the subjects were given a post-test. Finally, she demonstrated that bilinguals were certainly better than monolinguals on English Grammar and Armenian bilingual students outperformed Azeri-Turkish bilinguals.

Lee and Kim (2011) also conducted a study in which the effect of individuals' creativity and different extents of bilingualism as a multicultural experience was investigated. Participants were 116 Korean American students (49 boys & 65 girls). They found that there was a meaningful relationship between individuals' creativity and different extent of bilingualism, disregarding gender or age. Students who were high balanced bilinguals were more creative. Additionally, girls were better than boys in the fields of bilingualism, illustration, and abstractness of titles; however, age did not affect creativity and bilingualism.

A recent study by Carlo (2008) investigated the effects of bilingualism on speech recognition performance in noise. In this study the bilingualism effects on speech recognition examined. Participants were young Spanish-English bilinguals who had the normal-hearing ability. The ratio of correct speech recognition achieved from bilingual listeners was contrasted to young English and Spanish

monolingual listeners who had the normal-hearing ability. He found out that the Spanish-English bilingual learners did not outperform the English monolingual learners in speech recognition, but bilingual learners were equal to Spanish monolingual learners.

In 2009, Siegal, Iozzi, and Surian studied the relation between bilingualism and conversational understanding in young children. The major purpose of this study was to investigate whether bilingualism has a positive effect on conversational comprehension in young children. The population of participants was 163 young children whose age was 3-6 years old. Conversational Violations Test was given to participants to indicate their capability to recognize answers of the questions as violations of Gricean maxims of conversation to be educational and avoid repetition, talk the truth and to the point and polite. Although relatively differed in their second language vocabulary, Italian and Slovenian bilingual children commonly were better than Italian or Slovenian monolingual children. Therefore, it was concluded that bilingualism can have a positive effect on communicative responses.

To determine the effects of bilingualism and socioeconomic status on language ability and executive functioning, Calvo and Bialystok (2014) investigated a study in which one hundred and seventy-five children whose ages were 6-years old. They were selected to one of four groups that were different from aspects of socioeconomic status (SES; working class or middle class) and to be monolingual or bilingual. Different instruments such as nonverbal intelligence, language vocabulary tests to assess vocabulary and attention according to picture naming and two executive functioning tests were used. All participants were identical to the basic intelligence tests. But the results of the language and executive functioning tasks were affected by both socioeconomic status and bilingualism. Children who were in Middle-class were better in working-class children on all measures, and bilingual children did not outperform the monolingual children on language tests. Conversely, bilingual children outperformed the monolingual children on the executive functioning tasks. There were no relations between group factors and task factors. Therefore, they proved that bilingualism and socioeconomic status accompanied particularly and separately to children's advancement without regarding the level of the children on the other factor.

In 2016, Yamchi and Kumar studied monolingual and bilingual differences through which they scrutinized Iranian monolingual and bilingual EFL understudies' tuning in perception of the Latinized Persian subtitling of English films. One listening cognizance test which depended on the phonetic data of the film was regulated to the two gatherings of monolinguals and bilinguals. The

results indicated that monolinguals outperformed bilinguals on quick phonetic perception of the film.

Therefore, this study will attempt to bridge the gap regarding bilingualism effectiveness on listening comprehension among Azeri Turkish-Persian bilinguals and an attempt was made to compare the results with the other studies conducted on bilingualism phenomenon. In this regard, the method, instruments, and participants of this study in the following sections are presented.

## **Participants**

The participants in the present study were 44 junior high school students studying in Ramian and Azadshahr high schools in Golestan Province in Iran. All junior high school students were given a biographical questionnaire and based on answers of the questionnaire, 15 bilingual (Azeri-Persian) students and 29 monolingual (Persian) students were selected. The students were females ranging in age from 14 to 15 years old. Persian and Azeri-Turkish were the mother tongue of the participants. According to the results of the Nelson proficiency elementary test, the students' scores were between 14 to 17 out of 30. So it could be concluded that they were homogeneous. The researcher assigned both classes as the experimental group in Ramian and in Azadshahr. There were 29 monolingual students in Azadshahr class and 15 bilingual students in Ramian class.

## **Materials / Instruments**

### *Nelson English Language Proficiency Test*

The first instrument used in the present study was a Nelson proficiency test to determine the elementary students' level of language proficiency. We chose this level in order to have a homogeneous group that is potentially ready to be instructed the listening skill. Thirty items of Nelson elementary proficiency test were applied to determine the homogeneity of the groups regarding their levels of proficiency as an elementary level student. The rationale behind adopting this test was that it is one of the available standardized tests that can be employed on different levels of students.

### *Listening Pre/Post Tests*

The second instrument employed in the present study was a listening test which included 30 items in three parts. Listening and comprehension were the

main test formats employed in the listening tests. The pre-test and post-test were identical and have taken from Basic Tactics Listening book (Richards, 2010). The test score in the pre-test and post-test ranged from 0 to 30. In addition, to check the reliability of the listening scale, the internal consistency reliability of listening was checked by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient and it was found that the reliability of listening pre-test and post-test was 0.84.

### *Instructional Material*

The third instrument employed in this study was the listening text which was included in a basic level textbook of the *Tactics for listening* series (by Jack C. Richards, 2010). It was intended for students who have studied English previously but need further practice in understanding simple conversational language. Each unit features a topic that is related to everyday life such as food, greetings and socializing, or travel. A wide variety of stimulating and useful activities are included to give students graded practice in listening. In addition, listening comprehension tasks are practiced throughout the text. These tasks include listening for keywords, details, gist, making inferences, listening for attitudes, listening to questions and responding, recognizing, and identifying information. The textbook consists of twenty-four units each of which includes five sections. The topic of each unit and key vocabularies for the listening tasks are introduced in the first section. The next three sections include Listening 1, Listening 2, and Listening 3 that are linked with conversations or monologues on the audio program. Moreover, the listening sections provide task-based and graded listening practice. Finally, Conversation Corner as the last section persuades students to move from receptive to productive use of language through structured pronunciation, dictation, and conversation practice. In the present study, just first eight units of the textbook were employed to teach students in both experimental groups.

### *Biographical Questionnaire*

The fourth instrument employed in the present study was a biographical questionnaire including 5 questions. The items such as father's mother tongue, mother's mother tongue, the communicational language of parents at home, communicational language of the participant with parents at home, participants' level of familiarity in Azeri-Turkish, and the level of understanding in Azeri-Turkish language were asked. It was given to all junior high school students to select monolingual and bilingual students.

### *Procedure*

At first, the biographical questionnaire was given to all junior high school students to select the bilingual and monolingual groups to conduct the study. In the present study, both bilingual and monolingual groups were assigned as experimental. One class included 29 monolingual students and the other 15 bilingual students. Secondly, to control the students' level of proficiency, they were given a 30-item elementary Nelson proficiency test. The participants were required to answer the questions in 30 minutes. Thirdly, both groups received listening pre-tests to measure their listening skill before the treatment. The pre-test also included 30 items that the participants were asked to answer in 30 minutes. Then, both groups were given the handouts of the first eight units with the audio files. The content of the treatment was identical for two groups. In each session, the students were required to listen to each unit before the class. Both groups received eight units of Basic Tactics as listening textbook for eight weeks, two sessions in a week, and a total of 16 sessions. Each session lasted 30 to 45 minutes considering the length of the units. In each unit, five sections were covered: *Getting ready*, *three listening sections* in which were employed two tasks in each section, and *a conversation corner*. Additionally, at the beginning of each session, the unit's vocabulary was pre-taught and the title of the units was introduced.

Next, the directions of the first section were read and activities were answered either individually or in pairs by participants and the students' answers were checked by the teacher. Then, the audio file of the first listening test was played and activities were tried to be done by participants. Then, the rest of the audio files of listening passages, listening 2 and 3 were played with the same procedure.

To familiarize students with basic intonations, stress patterns reductions which is commonly employed by native speakers of English to improve students' listening comprehension skills. Two tasks in each unit focuses the students' attention on the pronunciation points and they were continued until all students could distinguish sounds correctly. In addition, to improve the students' discrete listening skills and reinforce their understanding of pronunciation two dictation tasks were given to them in which the students pre-read the dictation activity and were asked questions to identify key details of the conversation. Then, the audio passage was played and students listened to the whole conversation without filling in the dictation blanks. Finally, both groups received a listening post-test.

## Design of the Study

Most of the time, second language researchers are not able to find participants randomly in selected groups and they have to work with intact groups. According to Brown and Rodgers (2004), it is not easy to conduct studies in the field of education with real students and real teachers which are pure experimental studies. Hence, most of the studies tend to be quasi-experimental rather than real experimental studies. Therefore, this study was designed as a quasi-experimental study to focus on the effect of bilingualism on EFL learners' listening comprehension. There are two variables in this study, one independent variable, and one dependent variable. In this study, bilingual and monolingual have been considered as two independent variables. Listening skill was the dependent variable. The researcher had no control over the selection of the participants; they were conveniently selected as they were in classes of high schools in both Azadshahr and Ramian cities.

## Results

### *Reliability of the listening scale*

To check the reliability of the listening scale, the internal consistency reliability of listening was checked by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient and, as it is presented in table 1, it was found that the reliability of listening pre-test and post-test was 0.84.

**Table 1.**  
*Reliability of Pre-test and Post-test*

		N	%	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Cases	Valid	44	100.0	.849	60
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0		
	Total	44	100.0		

### Testing the Research Question

The research question was to examine whether there is a meaningful difference between Azeri-Persian bilinguals and Persian monolinguals in their listening

comprehension or not. The descriptive statistics for the listening pre-test and post-test in both experimental groups are detailed in Table 2. As observed, the mean score of monolingual and bilingual participants in the pretest were respectively 11.66 and 13.60, while the mean score of monolingual and bilingual participants in the posttest were 19.69 and 19.87 respectively.

**Table 2.**  
*Descriptive Statistics for Listening Pretest and Posttest*

	Language	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PRE total	Monolingual	29	11.66	5.499	1.021
	Bilingual	15	13.60	4.718	1.218
POST total	Monolingual	29	19.69	4.335	.805
	Bilingual	15	19.87	3.623	.935

However, a comparison of the means of pre and posttest of both experimental groups demonstrated a gain score of 6.27 (19.87 - 13.60) for bilingual and a gain score of 8.03 (19.69 - 11.66) for the monolingual group. This indicates the development of the listening comprehension of both groups. Furthermore, the initial look at the mean differences between bilingual and monolingual groups indicates that the monolingual group outperformed the bilingual group.

The standard deviation shows the dispersion of scores from each other, the more similar the scores are to each other, the lower the measure of dispersion will be. The standard deviations of post-test scores in bilingual and monolingual and group are 3.62 and 4.33, respectively. While in the pre-test of the bilingual and monolingual groups, they are 4.71 and 5.49, respectively. This shows that the dispersion of posttest scores is less than that of pretest scores in both groups.

Standard error mean shows how close the sample mean is to the population mean. The standard errors of post-test scores in the bilingual and monolingual groups are 0.93 and 0.80, respectively. While in the pre-test of the bilingual and monolingual groups, they are 1.21 and 1.02, respectively. This shows that the error mean of post-test scores is decreased in both groups and shows the improvements of the participants in both groups in the post-test.

**Table .3.**  
*Independent Samples Test of Listening Pre-test and Post-test*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Pre-test	2.107	.154	-1.16	42	.251	-1.945	1.670	-5.315	1.426
Post-test	2.234	.142	-.13	42	.893	-.177	1.308	-2.816	2.462

In the next step, to check whether these mean differences from pre- to post-tests are significant, inferential statistics were employed. An independent t-test was conducted to determine whether any significant difference might be observed for the listening pre-test of both groups. The results of the independent t-test, as presented in Table 3, indicate that there is not any significant difference between bilingual and monolingual groups' scores on the listening pretest ( $t(42) = -1.16, P = .25 > .05$ ).

In addition, the results of the independent t-test, as depicted in Table 3, indicate that there is not any significant difference between bilingual and monolingual groups' mean scores on the listening posttest ( $t(42) = -.13, P = .89 > .05$ ).

## Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine the effect of bilingualism on EFL learners' listening comprehension. The research question asked whether bilingualism affected EFL learners' listening skill or not. To test the research question the data was calculated by descriptive statistics and independent samples t-test for pre and post-tests. An initial look at the descriptive statistics revealed that the mean of listening comprehension in the post-test was higher than the pretest in both experimental groups. However, the results of the analysis showed that there is no significant difference in listening post-test in both experimental groups. Thus, it can be concluded that bilingualism did not have any significant effect on elementary learners' listening skill.

Through analysis of the data, no considerable effect of bilingualism on listening comprehension among Azeri-Persian bilinguals was found. The results of the present study do not support the related studies finding a positive effect of bilingualism on learning (e.g., Calvo & Bialystok, 2013; Lee & Kim, 2011; Merrikhi, 2012; Samadi & Maghsoudi, 2013; Siegal, Lozzi & Surian, 2009).

This finding is also inconsistent with the findings of Yamchi and Kumar (2016) who found that monolinguals outperformed bilinguals on quick phonetic perception of the films and Gorjian and Mahmoudi (2012) who found that there was a significant difference between the performance of bilinguals and monolinguals regarding their performances on listening comprehension and reported the positive effect of bilingualism on listening comprehension in Arab-Persian bilingual students and stated that bilingualism may have a positive effect on better comprehending of English tasks because of the experiences in listening to the different sounds in two Arab and Persian languages. And, they also stated that the similar phonemes in both Arabic and English languages (e.g., /w/, /θ/, etc.) may have possibly direct mutual effect on one another as they can recognize different sounds and symbols interactions, but those reasons cannot confirm in process of listening comprehension improvement of Azeri-Persian bilinguals. However, more research is needed to examine the effect of bilingualism in EFL Learners.

So, the reasons for the present finding might include some unsystematic errors which were unobservable in some students such as tiredness and reluctance. Another evidence for such a result is that the teacher might not be enough proficient enough to correct and analyze the problematic area of the students. Additionally, the limitation of the time may affect the listening comprehension of the students. If the study time had been longer, the results might have been different. Furthermore, existence of some phonemes (e.g., /w/, /θ/, /ð/, /r/, /t/, /æ/, etc.) on Azeri-Turkish that exist similar phonemes (e.g., /v/, /t/, /d/, /r/, /e/) respectively on Persian language may have negative effect on English listening comprehension. The last reason seems to be due to the level of the participants, elementary, who may not enough knowledge to recognize the English sounds and to have perfect comprehension.

## Conclusions

In the present study, an attempt was made to investigate the role of bilingualism on learners' listening comprehension in Azeri-Turkish vs. Persian elementary female students. The improvements in listening comprehension were

evidenced in the practical use of a listening comprehension task during the treatment. Data collected from the participants' performance in both pre-test and post-test showed considerable progress in listening comprehension during an 8-week treatment. The present study just involved elementary level students therefore the results cannot be generalized to all levels to indicate whether there will be any significant effect of bilingualism on higher-level students. Furthermore, it cannot be generalized to children who cannot read or write in English. In addition, it cannot be generalized to all kinds of bilinguals, because this study just conducted in Azeri-Turkish vs. Persian students. Even though, previous studies explored that bilingualism has a positive effect on learning (e.g., Calvo & Bialystok, 2013; Gorjian and Mahmoudi, 2012; Lee & Kim, 2011; Merrikhi, 2012; Siegal, Lozzi & Surian, 2009; Samadi & Maghsoudi, 2013), but may depend on unknown factors and the bilinguals' native tongue. Similarity or differences of sounds and phonemes of the native tongue of participants may have a positive or negative effect on listening comprehension.

The findings of this study suggest that bilingualism phenomenon may have a positive effect on the participants' performance in listening comprehension pre-test (see table 2), but during treatment may intervene other factors such as fatigue, unwillingness and novice teacher may have no positive effect and alter the influence of the bilingualism on listening comprehension in the case of this study. However, the results of the present study reveal that bilingualism did not affect junior female students' listening comprehension.

### **Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Further Research**

Several pedagogical implications for second language and EFL learners, teachers, policymakers, and the book designers can be derived: 1. The present study conducted on the effect of bilingualism on EFL learners' listening skill revealed that if teachers employ specific strategies, tasks of listening skill, bottom-up process, and two-way listening in the classroom, participants' listening comprehension will improve. 2. The present study is conducted in private and state schools respectively in Azadshahr and Ramian in Iran. Concerning state and private educational systems in the Iranian context, it can be found out that novice teachers, textbooks, and limitation of time of the English classes during a week and materials may negatively affect the EFL learners. The policymakers should provide a suitable educational schedule about focusing on teaching listening skill as a prior skill in both state and private educational systems. 3. It provides language teachers with information about listening comprehension with Iranian students at the

elementary level. Language teachers might be encouraged to try out the different strategies and processes of listening comprehension such as top-down, up-down, one-way, and two-way listening in the classroom. 4. It indicates that teachers can motivate learners to give the chance to students to participate in listening comprehension activities. It will give them a good chance to challenge themselves and they are motivated. 5. This study may give more information about listening skill to the text-book writers and designers of skills textbooks to design some more listening tasks in junior high school English books in Iran. 6. The results of this study give information about the kinds of listening comprehension, listening activities, and listening strategies to students.

The findings of the present study suggest further study in future research efforts: 1. The number of the participants in this research was limited hence the results cannot be generalized to other learners with other bilinguals. In the future study, it may be conducted with more numbers of participants among bilinguals with other languages. 2. The present study is conducted among junior high school female students. In order to generalize the finding of this study considerably more work will be needed to replicate this research on the junior high school male students with different levels of students. 3. The present investigation was limited by a short period, for future research it can be done about more factors in the language area, to more deeply investigate how bilingualism may influence listening comprehension, in this way the researcher should spend more time. 4. The present study is conducted among Azeri-Turkish vs. Persian junior high school female students. Conduct of the study in the case of other dialects in Iran such as Turkman-Persian and Baloochi-Persian would help us to establish a greater degree of accuracy on this matter. 5. To more clarify the effect of bilingualism on language learning, it is also advisable to conduct the same study on the other skills of the English language such as writing, reading, speaking, and grammar. 6. The present research was not specifically designed to evaluate factors related to sounds and phonemes of bilingual students' native language and its effect on listening comprehension, future research should, therefore, concentrate on the investigation of the effect of sounds and phonemes of bilingual students' native language and in this case, they will be similar to or different from English phonemes.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflicts of interest were reported by the authors.

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## PLURALISM AND COMMUNAL HARMONY: STUDYING THE CONTRIBUTION OF SUFIS

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### ABSTRACT

The concept of peace and communal harmony and coexistence and the subsequent prospects for establishment of Pluralistic Society in the global context vis-à-vis the role of Sufis has become an advanced discourse of contemporary academic activity. Appreciating and evaluating all discussions and conjectures about communal harmony and also giving a due space to the definitions that are being assigned to it in the modern world, the present paper is an attempt to discover the roots and origin of peace both as a concept and as a process are found in the early Islamic period. Most of the features of the current wave of peace and co-existence, in fact, owe its origin to the persuasion of Holy Quran and the sayings of Prophet. March of prominent Sufis in the far off lands, dissemination of knowledge and learning, establishment of khankahas and maktabas, the process of migration, Promotion of Sufi institutions and the concept of peace and justice are some of the features essentially with Islamic orientation which encourages Pluralistic viewpoint at doctrinal and practical levels. The paper as such would sketch out the scope, role as well as the impact of all such factors on the mode of pluralism that has got roots both in the civilization of Islam and Sufi way of life. Furthermore the proposed paper is an attempt to evaluate the role of Sufis and their institutions in secularizing and harmonizing the cultural and civilizational ethos of mankind in all periods of history. The paper is getting exceedingly important in its relevance in present day human circles as Sufis have played a wider role in bringing peace prosperity and co-existence in entire humanity. A Sufi right from his dawn up to desk always creates concept of brotherhood irrespective of color, caste, creed or religion and accordingly their teachings from ancient times till date and in future have strengthen human bonds by their modest and compassionate nature. Sufis are examples in this regard as it is evident from pages of history that their role has been bringing of humans in on circles i:e circle of love and fraternity.

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## Introduction

Sufism played a significant role in the history of mankind. Different Sufi orders not only fought with the self-ego, but also provide platform for Peace and Co-existence and also took active part in the promotion of harmony and love. According to *Gregory T. Massel*, Sufi orders had been the only effective Muslim response to the Mongols particularly in the twelfth and thirteen centuries. Bennigson says that the activities of the *Tariqa* were generally centered on the Holy places like tombs of Muslim saints. These places acted as a forum which the Sufi used for the promotion of peace and communal harmony. As a result of this, Islam became deeply rooted among the northern sedentary Turks, Tatars, Bashkirs, Kazak and Kirghiz nomads. It is, therefore, rightly advocated that from 12<sup>th</sup> century, the history is influenced by the activities of Sufi brotherhood.<sup>1</sup>

Sufis not only take in to cognizance the fundamentals of Islamic law but respect native traditions and customs and assured the people that Islam's liberalism could encompass their individualism. Though unconcerned with affairs of state, the Sufis had a profound influence on the Muslim polity. They humanized its rigors and reduced the area of conflict between religion and politics. By providing Islam a broader base, Non- Muslims flocked to Sufi hospices in large numbers and in due course hundreds of thousands came into the fold of Islam. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, large numbers of people, particularly in Central Asia had accepted Islam through the preaching of Sufis. Under their impact, the Mongols, who had been the scourge of Islam, became patrons of Islam.<sup>2</sup>

Sufism, which did not rely on the strict letter of the law, also respected native traditions and customs and assured the people that Islam's liberalism could encompass their individualism.<sup>3</sup> This was particularly so in the Kirghiz tribes, who found in Sufism a type of psychological and collective self-defense of their identity during periods of disorientation in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> There are a number of parallel concepts in Sufism which are intelligible in other traditions, including Vedic concepts of non-dualism, paralleling the oneness of being, and the Buddhist nirvana, paralleling notions of annihilation and subsistence.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Naseem Ahmad Shah, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-11

<sup>2</sup> Rafic Zakaria, *The Struggle within Islam: the Conflict between Religion and Politics*, N.Y., Penguin, 1988, p.94.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.103.

<sup>4</sup> Guy Imart, "The Islamic Impact on Kirghiz Ethnicity", *Nationalities Papers*, 14 nos. 1-2, Spring-Fall 1986, pp.83-86.

<sup>5</sup> Rafic Zakaria, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

Sufism emphasizes raising awareness of the Real, as distinct from a distorted understanding of what is taken to be real everyday life, through genuine knowledge of the self and the „veils‘ which divide it from any experience of the truth. This is also the search for genuine Existence.<sup>6</sup> It can therefore suggest an emphasis on individualism which approaches that found in Western humanism. It also emphasized compassion from one human being to another, regardless of all other distinctions. This trend greatly widened Islam and aided its attraction throughout Central Asia, India, Southeast Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. We see this tolerant trend in the fact that the Mulla Abu‘l Hakim issued a *fatwa* (ruling) that it was wrong to build a mosque by demolishing a temple, while the Sufi poet Sarmad argued that Hindus and Muslims were both seeking the same truth, though using different verbal formulations.<sup>7</sup> The pragmatic and humanitarian elements of Sufism can be found in the ten principles of proper human conduct as outlined by Abd al-Qadir Jilani (1077-1166):

- *Never swear by God.*
- *Never speak an untruth even in jest.*
- *Never break a promise.*
- *Never curse anyone.*
- *Never harm anyone.*
- *Never accuse anyone of religious infidelity.*
- *Never become a party to anything sinful*
- *Never impose a burden on others.*
- *Never accept anything from human beings - God alone is the giver.*
- *Look for in others the good points and not the bad.*<sup>8</sup>

These conceptions, of course, link back to the central idea in Sufism, that of love (*mahabba*), in which the trinity of Lover, Loved and Love are based ultimately on a compassionate and merciful Allah.<sup>9</sup>

The Sufis were closer to the general masses than to the rulers. In fact, rulers were often tempted to be seen in their company to acquire some legitimacy. The noted theologian cum Sufi Al-Ghazali, says that one should not look at the face of tyrant and unjust sultan, and even if it becomes necessary, one should turn one’s face away while talking to such ruler. Al-Ghazali also defined tasawwuf in a broader way as: **التعظيم الامر الله والشفقة على خلق الله**

<sup>6</sup> Lloyd Ridgeo, *The Felicitous Life in Sufism, Sufi, No. 28, Winter 1995-96*, p.30.

<sup>7</sup> Rafic Zakaria, *The Struggle within Islam: the Conflict between Religion and Politics*, N.Y., Penguin, 1988, p.140.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p.106.

<sup>9</sup> A.J Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1950, p.21.

“Reverence to the commandments of God and kindness towards His creatures.”<sup>10</sup>

Saiyyid Ali Hamdani although considered himself to be chosen by God and charged with the responsibility of the revival and consolidation of Islam. But he strongly advocated the principle of universal justice. Both in his letters and the *Zakhiratu al- Muluk* he repeatedly underlines the fact that one of the important obligations of ruler is:

كله فوض عدل و محسبي تجوی ع رعلا گرد آذ و درش  
 آثار محسبایه ایان لهل و ل لذوی س کذری رکحتاشن س  
 حك اسد چ آكه رحود حكع سیلوه کلفر و هو هی راش اهل  
 اسد و چهن عدد و احیای کن تنفی ک هی کوتذر راش اف تود

“To provide protection to his subjects through strict administration of justice. Those who follow the cardinal principles of justice and public welfare, he says, shall attain salvation and those who go astray shall face rack and ruin.”<sup>11</sup>

Thus, it is obvious how Sufis maintained their distance from the power centres; and it was for this reason that they were so dear the common people. Though there was always an exception to any rule, most of the Sufis maintained this distance. They did not want religion to be misused by rulers. Religion for these Sufis, was not a means for acquiring power and influence, rather it was meant for their spiritual needs.

One of the great Sufi Shaikh is Khawaja Ahrar whose contribution is noteworthy in establishing peace and co-existence in Sufi history. Khwaja Ahrar regularly helped broker peace between rival Timurid princes. One of his letters addressed to Sultan Husayn Bayqara, states his opinions on a land distribution plan meant to appease belligerent princes.<sup>12</sup> The Khwaja approves this scheme, giving the highest priority to peace in a kingdom. He writes, “What good will come from two Muslim factions who are related to one another being at war?”<sup>13</sup> The Khwaja was known as a political mediator and this can be judged from biographical accounts of his life. An account that is present in both *Rashaḥat ,Ain al-Hayat* and the *Silsilat al-‘Arifin* attests to this popular image.<sup>14</sup> The Khwaja was accompanying the forces of Sultan Aḥmad Mirza as the latter rode against the combined forces of Umar Shaykh Mirza and Sultan Maḥmud Mirza. Once camped, The Khwaja asked the Sultan,

<sup>10</sup> Asghar Ali Engineer, *On Developing theology of peace in Islam*, Sterling publishers, Okhla, New Delhi, 2003, p. 106.

<sup>11</sup> A. Q. Rafiqi, op. cit., pp. 101-102.

<sup>12</sup> Jo-Ann Gross and Asom Urunbaev, *The Letters of Khwaja ,Ubayd Allah Ahrar and his Associates*, Brill, 2001, pp.117-18.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, pp. 118-19.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, pp.118-19.

Mirza and Sultan Maḥmud Mirza. Once camped, The Khwaja asked the Sultan, "Mirza! Why did you bring me along? I am not a man of war! And if you desire peace, what then is the delay?" The Mirza replied, "What authority do I have? All affairs are subject to your will!" The Khwaja arranged for the three parties to meet each other. The Khwaja is reported to have said, "I have become weak from old age. I bear the burden of these negotiations so that you don't entangle yourselves (with your quarrelling)." In the end, all three parties made peace with each other. Referring to this event, Mirza Haidar Dughlat remarks, "No one could resist the entreaties of the blessed mind of the holiness."<sup>15</sup> This account shows that not only was the Khwaja close to the Timurid princes, but that he also bore the responsibility of having the three Timurid family members make peace with each other. This demonstrates the importance of peace and stability in the eyes of the Khwaja and how he reminded the Timurids that they should maintain cohesion among themselves.

Likewise, there may be a greater scope for an independent role by women within the Sufi tradition than in some strict interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence. Rabi'a al-Adawiya (717- 801 A.D.), for example was a prominent woman saint who never married, while Fatima Nishapuri (d. 838 A.D.) was respected as a great Sufi teacher.

Sufism became a major progressive force that helped to spread Islam in the Indian and Malay world.<sup>16</sup> In many ways, it underpins the more everyday form of Islam lived in villages and communities in these societies. This trend continues today in the privacy of small communities, as well as in a revival of Sufi literature and academic societies. Through its love of music, dance, poetry, story-telling and humor, Sufism helped create a vigorous culture which penetrated much of Central Asia, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia. In this guise Sufis are often known to the West as '*dervishes*', or spinning dervishes, whose practices like the special chants and breathing exercises lead to a trance state (*wajd*) designed to bring the participant closer to God. Likewise their humorous, insightful stories have been spread to the West by Idrees Shah.<sup>17</sup>

The Sufi artistic tradition greatly enriched both Arabic and Persian culture. Sufi liberalism had other important effects. While music and dance were anathema to the *ulama*, these were encouraged in Sufi hospices.

<sup>15</sup> Mirza Muhammad Haider Dughlat, *A History of the Moghuls*, Forgotten Books, 2018, p. 113.

<sup>16</sup> AL-Hujwiri, Ali B. Uthman Al-Jullabi The Hashf Al-Mahjub: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism, trans. Reynold Nicholson, London, Luzac and Company, 1976, Chapter XI, pp140-141

<sup>17</sup> Imos, Zos "Sufi Traditions", (Internet Source), 1994

Their songs were full of passionate devotion to God, the unity of the soul and the body and the oneness of mankind. They indulged in *sama*, (Sufi audition) or the chanting of song and music, which led to a state of mystic exaltation. The theme is as common in the poems of Ibn al-Arabi and some of the Arabic poets as in the Persian compositions of such literary giants as Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207-73), Farid al-Din Attar (d. 1190) and Muslihuddin Saadi (1193-1292). One of the greatest Sufi saints of all time was Abd al-Qadir Jilani (1077-1166), better known as *Gauth al-Azam* or 'the Sultan of Saints' who preached in Baghdad. He was a disciple of Ghazali and his eloquence was as soul-stirring as the radiance of his personality. He founded the Ghauth al order which spread to most parts of the Muslim world and may be regarded as the mother of all Sufi orders. According to H.A.R. Gibb, The Qadriyya order is, on the whole, amongst the most tolerant and progressive orders, not far removed from orthodoxy, distinguished by philanthropy, piety and humility and averse to fanaticism, whether religious or political.<sup>18</sup>

*Sufism thus unfolded both as a religious science and as a social movement, with each society or order commanding large numbers of adherents. Indeed, as these orders continued to unfold and spread across the Islamic world, their masters came to wield tremendous authority, not just in the spiritual realm, but in the temporal world as well. These masters came to command the reverence and allegiance of thousands, even tens of thousands of disciples, each of whom had given an oath of obedience to the Shaikh, and through the Shaikh, to the Prophet and ultimately to God.*<sup>19</sup>

Thus, Gianotti concluded the Sufism that helped to spread Islam through Central and East Asia, the Southeast Asian archipelago, the Indian Sub-Continent and sub-Saharan Africa was both a spiritual and a social force. The legacy it left was an Islam that preached with cultural sensitivity, promoted tolerance and inter-religious cooperation, and never abandoned the inner life and the spiritual core for the sake of solely political activism.

All these aspects, however, were all directed towards achieving *wilayah*, or identification of man with God.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Sufi propagated Islam did not make any violent uprooting but offered immediate values without displacing the old. In a society that was divided on more than one fronts and engaged in continued internal warfare destroying thereby the precious resources of a region that was otherwise most fertile from the cultural and civilizational point of view and possessed such human resource energies that, once channelized properly, brought momentous and

<sup>18</sup>Rafic Zakriyya, op. cit., p.105.

<sup>19</sup> Rentz, George "The Wahhabis", in Arberry, A.J. (ed.) Religion in the Middle East Three Religions in Concord and Conflict, Cambridge, CUP, 1969, Vol. 2, pp.270-271.

<sup>20</sup> Rafic Zakria, *The Struggle Within Islam: The Conflict Between Religion and Politics*, N.Y., Penguin, 1988, p.109

historical changes in to the whole landscape of human civilization, Islam provided an inner impulse to the movements of change and worked as a cohesive factor that gave meaning to the whole social structure and new social revolution was set in motion that rested upon a universal religion.<sup>21</sup> It was in Central Asia that Islam found the host to its philanthropic version and formulated, promulgated and propagated the Sufi perspective of Islam. In course of time the Turks Sufi became the torch bearers of Islamic worldview, value-system and religious philosophy. Rather the values that emanated from the Central Asian civilizational background. The interaction between the local traditions and the mainstream Islamic legacy gave this region the abiding values of coexistence, tolerance, fellowship of faith and brotherhood of man. Its peoples have been great advocates and exponents of religious tolerance and horizontal humanist values.<sup>22</sup>

Sufism spread more rapidly due to its openness to and acceptance of other religions and its clear yet simple emphasis on simplicity, piety, and purity. Sufism represents the cosmopolitan, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of Islam, which are capable of and willing to engage in discourse with other cultures and religions (especially the other Abrahamic faiths). Sufi history in Central Asia bears out this point: upon entering the region, it faced a variety of religions and religious traditions ranging from Zoroastrianism to shamanistic animism. Yet Sufism accepted them all as different manifestations of a single Truth, treating them with respect (and earning their respect in turn). Since Sufism spread predominantly by merchants and traveling scholars, it was able to gain access to a ready audience in both urban and rural areas. Once established, it remained nearly unchanged for several centuries. He mentioned that as late as 1988 an observer noted that organized networks of Sufi brotherhoods that have been popular in Central Asia since medieval times continue to exercise considerable influence on the Muslims. Of these, the Naqshbandi order is the most popular, followed by the *Qadiriyyah*, the *Suharwardi*, the *Yasawiyah* and the Chistiyyaorders in India as well.<sup>23</sup>

In spite of all the Russian atrocities Central Asia is perhaps the only region with Muslim majority population, who did not advocate armed revolution against the Russian atrocities inflicted upon Muslim population of the region. There would be many reasons responsible for this compassionate behavior of Central Asian people but the influence of Sufi traditions that had molded the mind set of Muslim population for centuries together is one of the significant reasons to advocate a harmonious life. *Das Bha Kaar, Dil Bha Yaar* was not the guiding force for the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p.109.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p.109.

<sup>23</sup>Understanding Sufism and its Potential Role in US Policy, ed., Zeyno Baran retrieved from, WWW.NIXONCENTER.ORG

emergence of Sufi orders of Central Asia, it stemmed down to the general masses of the region as well, consequently after going through the different phase of central Asian history, Islam with a *Sophistic* connotation developed peace, harmony and co-existence among the masses of Central Asia. All the Sufi orders that developed on the soil of Central Asia advocated and recommended such teaching that would enhance man God relationship in particular and man-man relationship in general. They demonstrated compassionate attitude towards the sufferings of the people and their (*langer*) common kitchen open to all was the sign of love, benevolence, brotherhood. Central Asian Sufis engaged not in struggle for power, but to overpower their desire and greed, and cultivate compassionate attitude towards others. They communicate with great care the Divine message of truth, justice, benevolence, love, compassion, human dignity and equality.<sup>24</sup>

Though devout, most of these Schools of Sufism are much more able to accommodate modern and secular trends compared to certain radical forms of Islam found in other parts of the world, e.g. the Wahhabism exported from Saudi Arabia. Previously, the Sufi orders in Arabia were fiercely suppressed by the Wahhabi movement, which helps explain the fact that Central Asia has not proved the most fertile of grounds for Wahhabism, in spite of financial resources pumped into the region from Saudi Arabia. Wahhabis, in particular, are opposed to the notion of ecstatic mysteries, as well as the visiting of the tombs of saints which is viewed as potentially leading to idolatry.<sup>25</sup>

### **Sufism: A Global Message of Pluralism and Harmony**

Historically speaking, Sufism appeared in Islam towards the end of the first century of the Islamic calendar. Some Sufis, of course maintain that the Prophet (SAW) of Islam himself is the mainspring of Sufism and they draw the inspiration from him for their spiritual and devotional practices. Although there is a debate about the meaning of the word Sufi but every human being whether Muslim or non-Muslim believed that the message of Sufis is based upon love, peace, benevolence, harmony. The word Sufi has been widely used in the Islamic history for a distinct set of doctrines and practices within Islamic framework, and has set a vast following among the Muslims.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Understanding Sufism and its Potential Role in US Policy, ed., Zeyno Baran retrieved from, WWW.NIXONCENTER.ORG.

<sup>25</sup> Ahmad Rashid, *Revival of Islam*, Far Eastern Economic Review, 1992, p.33.

<sup>26</sup> Iqtidar Hussain Siddiqui, "Sufi Cults and the making of a pluralist society", ed. Anup Taneja, Sufi Cults and evolution of Medieval Indian Culture, Indian council of historical Reseach, New Delhi, 2003, p. 34-36

The Sufi Islam, it is interesting to note, is love and peace oriented and their God is God of love and *Ar-Rahman ir-Rahim* (Merciful). It is for this reason the huge masses of people of different faiths and Muslims have been attracted by the Sufi Islam, which was spiritual and emotional appeal and also flexible and soothing to the soul.

Ibn Arabi has exercised great influence on Sufis of whole globe as his doctrine quite accommodative and flexible in many ways. According to this, the real existence (*wujud*) is that of Allah whereas all of us are His manifestations. Such a doctrine leads to demolition of barriers between people of one religion and the other. In fact, it brought Muslims and non-Muslims together in world especially in India and helped evolve a composite culture.<sup>27</sup>

The fundamental doctrine of the Sufi thought is what has been called *sulh-i-kul*, i.e. peace with all. Thus peace, coexistence, friendship, brotherhood and love have been at the centre of Sufism. Moulana Rumi, whose *Masnavi* (an epic poem running into several volumes) is considered by many as the Qur'an in Persian, (درت ای پیلوی لرای) puts great stress on love and peace. In one of his couplets, he says, you (Sufi) have come to effect union (between people) and not for separating them. He also says that dogs fight for the bones and the wise take the marrow, meaning thereby that it is not dogmas which contain the truth of religion; rather the essence of religion, its kernel is important. One of the greatest Sufi thinkers of Islam, Maulana Rumi has inspired and continues to inspire generation after generation of Muslims and others.<sup>28</sup>

The contribution of the Sufis to society lies in their sincere and dedicated struggle to find a unity for the heterogeneous elements that make up its totality. They appreciated the multi-racial, multi-religious and multilingual pattern of world society. For them God was not a logical abstraction of unity, but a living reality who can be approached through the service of mankind. Their efforts were, therefore, directed towards the creation of a healthy social order free from dissensions, discords and conflicts. It was a herculean task but they undertook it as a divine mission. In love, faith, toleration and sympathy they found the supreme talisman of human happiness. Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya often cited in his assemblies a remark of Shaikh Abu Sa'id Abul Khair (b. 1049) that though there were myriads of routes and roads leading to God, none was quicker and more effective than bringing happiness to the hearts of men. Ibn Battuta found in Damascus a trust which existed for providing balm to afflicted hearts.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Asghar, Ali Engineer, op. cit., p.104.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p.105.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p.105-7.

It is interesting to observe that Sufism - which has been widely known as a silent movement for approaching God and purifying the heart to become a „Perfect Man’ (*al-Insan al-Kamil*) - has to some extent become an active and sometimes radical movement when it encounters situations where injustice exists. Example of this can be observed in some cases such as Al-Ghazali, who wrote some treatises in relation to giving advice and criticizing some unjust acts by rulers. These letters were a token of Al-Ghazali’s concern about the injustice of the ruler of his time. In his treatises Al-Ghazali wisely advised the ruler to be a just ruler and moreover Al-Ghazali bitterly criticized unjust rulers. According to Al-Ghazali - who drew his wisdom from Islamic teachings - the ruler’s duty is to serve the people. Al-Ghazali is actually a good example of how Sufism is not associated with passivity. A real Sufi is one who cares about justice and prosperity for the people, and is ready to become involved in political and social affairs for the sake of people and society<sup>30</sup>

The second example is the case of Sanusi of Cyrenaica in Libya. Before the coming of Sheikh Sanusi and Sayyid al-Mahdi, the Cyreneican people, although they were Muslims, did not care about the Islamic teachings. After those two Sufis mentioned above transformed the spirit of Islamic teachings through right guidance and well organized preaching, the preaching of Islam was the basis of the dynamics of change in the social and political life of the Muslims in Cyrenaica.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Abdul Qayyum, *Letters of al-Ghazali*, Indonesian translation by Haidar Bagir ( Jakarta, Penerbit Hikmah, 2000 ) . This book is a compilation of letters of *al-Ghazali*, from many letters in Arabic and Persian, such as *Tabaqat-i-Syafi’ah*, *Mama’ul Insya*, *Atsarul Wuzara etc.*The 26 letters are as follow: 1.) To Sultan Sanjar al-Saljuki about the advice to Islamic scholars not to try to get a good position in the court, 29-32. 2.) To Nizamuddin Fakhru Mulk about the obligation of the ruler to live simple life, 33-43. 3.) To Nizamuddin Fakhru Mulk about the importance of a judge to be fair and honest, 45-48. 4.) To Nizamuddin Fakhru Mulk about the obligation of the ruler to prioritize the poor people, 49-58. 5.) To Nizamuddin Fakhru Mulk about the obligation of the ruler to be just and fair to all the people, 59-67. 6.) To Nizamuddin Fakhru Mulk about the obligation to hold the power honestly, 69-72. 7.) To Nizamuddin Fakhru Mulk about the ban to worship the power, 73-83. 8.) To Shihabul Islam about the obligation to protect the ulema (Islamic scholars), 85-89. 9.) To Shihabul Islam about the obligation of the rulers to understand the wisdom of Sufis, 91-95. 10.) To Shihabul Islam about the ban to be a hungry for power, 97-99. 11.) To Mujiruddin about the obligation of the ruler to promote the fair and honest judge, 101-110. 12.) To Mujiruddin not to be trapped into the falseness of worldly life, 111-121. 13.) To Mujiruddin about the obligation of the ruler to abolish the practice of corruption, nepotism and collusion, 123-129. 14.) To Mu’inul Mulk about the obligation of the ruler to fire the mean and corrupt officers, 131-135.15.) To Sadat Khan is a warning not to be a hungry for the property, not to be greedy for it, 137-141. 16.) To one of the rulers that giving the alms and contributions to the needy is a moral therapy, 143-151. 17.) To all the Head of Administration of the departments in the governments to spend the money and property in God’s path, 153-156. 18.) To all Judges in Maghrib about the ban to work for the sake of ruler but for the sake of God, people and justice, 157-168. 19.) To Khawaja Imam Abbasi to remember God in any circumstances, 169-172. 20.) To Abul Hasan Mas’ud bin Muhammad bin Ghanam about the Sufistic life style as a tool to understand worldly life, 173-178. 21.) To all the Ulemas (Muslim scholars) about the obligation to respect the ulama (Muslim Scholars) and the pious people, 179-180. 22.) To Khawaja Abbas Khawarzam about the meaning of real life, 181-182. 23.) To Ibnul Amie about the dangers of collecting knowledge without practicing it, 183-188. 24.) To whom it may concern that is to all the scholars to understand spiritual world, 189-192. 25.) To Judge, Imam Sa’id Imaduddin Muhammad al-Wazzan about the importance of the judge to ask for the advice from Muslim scholars (Ulemas), 193-195. 26.) To all the people wishing to live in harmony and piety, orientation of social life which directs to the height of the spiritual life, 197-204.

<sup>31</sup> E.E. Evan Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973, p.64.

The third example of the dynamics of Sufism is the Sufis in Egypt. A good understanding of Islam has made the Sufi group in Egypt active in both spiritual and worldly life. The understanding of destiny does not make them passive to surrender to the will of God. Moreover, their understanding of destiny as has been decided by God makes them active in the Muslim community, as members of society and as members of *Tarekat*.<sup>32</sup> An example of this worth mentioning is *Tarekat Shadhiliyyah* whose members use the practice of Sufism as the vital driving force in social and spiritual life, without neglecting their social neighborhood.<sup>33</sup>

The Sufi *weltanschauung* was based on three basic postulates which determined their attitude towards God, man and society.

1. All people are the children of God on earth (الخلق كعبي الله) The *Sunnan-i-Abu Da'ud* reports that the Prophet used to pray at night: „Oh God! I bear witness that all Thy creatures are brothers. (يا ارحم الراحمين)

Sa'di said that the reason for human brotherhood was that all human beings were made of the self-same clay and were as interdependent on each other as the limbs in the human body.<sup>34</sup>

It would be vain and whimsical to think that they did not believe in their religious identity. While firmly adhering to the basic principles of their faith, they did not carry this difference to social relationships. Their toleration was the toleration of a spiritually powerful man who, while jealous of the frontiers of his own faith, admires other forms of thought and behavior. When Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya saw Hindus bathing in the Jamna and singing devotional songs, he said:

(مرلوم راس دراميدى جو لفظه گامه)

“Every people have their own path, their own religion and centre of worship”

A whole world of religious broad-mindedness and tolerance is epitomized in this hemistich which came to be frequently cited inside and outside the *khanqahs* of medieval saints. Iqbal considered the following verse of Amir Khusrau as the best illustration of religious toleration and coexistence:

<sup>32</sup> Michael Gilson, *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt, An Essay in the Sociology of Religion*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973, pp. 129-133.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p.133-139.

<sup>34</sup> Neeru Misra, *Sufis and Sufism: Some Reflections*, Manohar Publishers, Delhi, 2004, pp. 4-20.

ایسے کہ ز بت طعنه بہ ہندو بری

ہم زدے آموز پرستش گری

“O you! Who sneer at the idolatry of the Hindu, Learn also from him how worship is done”<sup>35</sup>

Common to both paths was also ascetic’s mot or the life of simplicity, and use of the language of the commoners to express the principles of the path. It was this assimilating approach of Sufism in South Asia that became the bonding factor of the society.

The spirit of toleration, as Gibbon has remarked and Iqbal has approvingly quoted, springs from very different attitudes of the mind of man. There is the toleration of the philosopher, to whom all religions are equally true; of the historian, to whom all are equally false; and of the politician, to whom all are equally useful. There is the toleration of the man who tolerates other modes of thought and behavior because he has himself grown absolutely indifferent to all modes of thought and behavior. There is the toleration of the weak man who, on account of sheer weakness, pockets all kinds of insults heaped on things or persons whom he holds dear. It is obvious that these types of tolerances have no ethical value. On the other hand, they unmistakably reveal the spiritual impoverishment of the man who practices them. True toleration is begotten of intellectual breadth and spiritual expansion. The Sufis’ toleration was an expression of confidence in their faith. For them all people were the children of God on earth and any social discrimination was a negation of the true spirit of faith.

The second foundational principle of the Sufi approach and ideology was their firm faith in *تخلقوا با لاخلق اللہ* (pattern yourself upon the nature of God).<sup>36</sup> It meant that the aim of human life is to reflect in one’s own thought and activity the attributes of God. Perfection in human life could be reached only by expressing in one’s life more and more divine qualities. God’s way is that He extends his bounties to all – the pious and the sinner, the believer and the non-believer, the high and the low. When the sun rises, it gives light and warmth to all living beings; when it rains, all benefit from the showers; the earth keeps its bosom open for all. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad calls it the mark of *Rububiyat* and thus explains its spirit: „The strangest thing about this scheme of Providence, though the most patent, is the uniformity and harmony underlying it. The method and manner of providing means of sustenance

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p.18.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p.13.

for every object of existence are the same everywhere. A single principle is at work in all things. The stone may appear different from the fragrant flower, but the two receive sustenance in the same way, and are granted growth in the same style. <sup>37</sup>

Shaikh Muninddin Chisti insisted that man could inculcate qualities of God:

اول سخاوتے چوں سخاوت دریا، دوم شفقتے چوں شفقت آفتاب، سوم تواضع چوں تواضع زمین

*To develop river-like generosity, sun-like affection and earth-like hospitality (Siyar-ul-Auliya).*<sup>38</sup>

As these phenomena of nature make no distinction between any creatures of God, likewise man should not discriminate between one human being and another. Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya told his audience that once Prophet Abraham was reluctant to ask a non-believer to partake of food with him. Prompt came the admonition from God: „Oh Abraham! We can give life to this man but you cannot give food to him.’ The Sufi *khanqahs* supplied food and shelter to all sorts of people, no matter to what religion they belonged. Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya used to fast regularly. When food was brought to him at the time of *sahri*, morsels would stick in his throat as his mind went back to persons who had gone to bed without food.<sup>39</sup>

A necessary concomitant of this approach was that man promptly responded to human misery and strained his every nerve to save people from hunger and misery. *Sahih Muslim* contains the following *Hadis-i Qudsi*:

On the Day of Judgment God will address a particular individual: “O Son of Adam! I fell ill but you did not attend on me.’ Bewildered, this individual will say: „How is that possible? Thou art the Creator and Sustainer of all the worlds.’ God will reply: „Doesn’t thou know that such and such a creature of mine living near thee fell ill, but you did not turn to him in sympathy? If you had but gone near him you would have found Me by his side.’ In like manner, God would address another individual: „O Son of Adam! I had asked of you a piece of bread but you did not give it to me!’ The individual would submit: „How could this happen? Thou doesn’t stand in need of anything’. And God will reply: „Do not you remember that so and so among the hungry creatures of Mine had asked you for food and did you not refuse to give it to him? If you had fed him, you would have found Me by his side.”<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *Tarjuman ul-Qur’an*, Sahitiya Akademy, New Delhi, 1964, trans. Syed Abdul Laeef. Basic Concepts of the Qur’an, Academy of Islamic Studies, Hyderabad, 1958, Vol. I, p. 24.

<sup>38</sup> Neeru Misra, op. cit., pp. 14-17.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid,

<sup>40</sup> Sahih Bukhari,

Another major contribution of Sufism was an immense service to humanity through message of love and brotherhood. Mir Khurd in his *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, had categorically stated that Nizamuddin used to say, "the followers of *tariqat* and *haqiqat* agree that the main purpose and objective of man's creation is love of supreme Being. From the love of God, he arrives at the love of humanity. There are two specialties invaluable and precious i.e. *tasbih-i- mllat* (improvement of people) and *tajrid-i- khidmat* (love of humanity). Love of humanity was an "ethical ideal" carried further by most of the Sufis in whole globe. The Sufi advocated the path of peace and coexistence and asked people to avoid rift and bloodshed. Sheikh Farid ud.din Ganj Shakar advised his disciples to placate one's enemies. He once told a visitor: "do not give me a knife, give me a needle for. The knife is an instrument for cutting asunder and the needle for sewing together." Jamal ud-din Hansi, a disciple of Shaikh Farid Ganj, remarked Sufis main aim as:<sup>41</sup>

يا احمد لا ينال المقصود بكثرة الصلوة والصيام بل ينال بقضاء حوائج الانام

*"The mystic goal is achieved not through the rituals of fasting and prayers but by fulfilling the requirements of the needy"*

Bibi Fatima Sam, a very respected mystic woman of medieval India whose hut in Delhi attracted people from far and near, used to say that the divine reward for giving a piece of bread and a glass of water to the hungry was greater than offering thousands of genuflections of prayer and keeping thousands of fasts.<sup>42</sup>

Shaikh Nizam-u'd-din Auliya classified devotion to God into two categories: *ta'at-i lazmi* and *ta'at-i muta'addi*. *Ta'at-i lazmi* consisted of prayers and penitence's that an individual performed; the *ta'at-i muta'addi* consisted in helping the needy and the poor and feeding the hungry. He told his disciples that the reward of *ta'at-i-muta' addi* was greater than that of obligatory prayers. Sa'di, the famous Persian poet, echoed the same sentiments when he said:

طريقت بجز و خدمت خلق نيست

به تسبيح و سجاده و دلق نيست

*"Higher spiritual life is nothing but service of humanity, It is not (chanting) the rosary, (remaining on the) prayer carpet or (wearing) coarse garments."*

<sup>41</sup> K.A.Nizami, *Impact of Sufi saints on Indian culture and society, in contemporary relevance of Sufism*, pp. 139-167.

<sup>42</sup> Riazul Islam, op. cit., p. 325.

Sa'di places service of God's creatures at the forefront of not only Sufism but even religion in general. It is undoubtedly represents a worthy ideal which unfortunately has remained largely unrealized. This, it will fair to remark, is a versified *qaul* (saying) with its normal share of poetic exaggeration.<sup>43</sup>

Sa'di in most of his poems and anecdotes gives attention to other human beings and recommends people to help and love each other as all of them are from one essence. He always thinks on the life of others and philanthropically says that the burden of others should bring pain to the others: When I see the poor dervish unfed My own food is pain and poison to me. Sa'di reverences and respects the dervishes and poor people as he writes: <sup>44</sup>

*One night a king dreamt that he saw a king in paradise and a dervish in hell. The dreamer exclaimed: what is the meaning of this? I should have thought that the positions would be reversed.' A voice answered: The king is in heaven because he respected dervishes. The dervish is in hell because he compromised with kings.*

The Sufis identified service of God with the service of man. Shaikh Junaid Baghdadi was quoted in the mystic circles of Delhi as saying that he found God among the poor people in the streets of Medina.<sup>45</sup>

The third foundational principle of Sufi ideology was their faith in the Unity of Divine revelation, which paved the way for contact with people of diverse faiths and denominations.

This basic approach opened the doors of deeper ideological contact and communication with people of different faiths, and put an end to 'all notions of exclusiveness which had hitherto prevailed among mankind assigning divine blessings and favors to one's own community' <sup>46</sup>Amir Khusrau, who had delved deep into the Hindu religious literature, said:

نیست بنود ارچہ کہ دیندار چوما

بست بے جاے باقرار چوما

<sup>43</sup> Riazul Islam, op. cit., pp. 324-336.

<sup>44</sup> Neeru Misra, op. cit., pp. 15-18.

<sup>45</sup> Riazul Islam, op. cit., pp. 236-250.

<sup>46</sup> Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *Tarjuman ul-Qur'an*, Sahitiya Akademy, New Delhi, 1964, trans. Syed Abdul Laeef..Basic Concepts of the Qur'an, Academy of Islamic Studies, Hyderabad, 1958, Vol. I, p. 24.

*“Though Hindus do not believe in the religion in which we do, in many matters they and we believe in the same thing.”*

Toynbee has very correctly observed that the missions of the higher religions are not competitive but complementary. If the unity of Divine Revelation is accepted, it would automatically lead to this attitude of mind and soul. The Sufis not only preached it but practiced it and helped in pulling down the barriers between various religious groups. Shah Niaz Ahmad of Bareilly thus declared the essential unity of all religions:<sup>47</sup>

یہ سب ادیان و مٹل بین شاخ باے یک درخت

اک جڑ سے بین نکلی ڈالیاں سب پھوٹ پھوٹ

*“All these religions and faiths are branches of the same tree; They have sprouted from one and the same root.”*

All religions have three essential elements – metaphysical, institutional and social, i.e. a conception of a Supreme Being, rituals and a code of ethics. The code of ethics assumes two forms: personal morality and social ideal. Richard Gregory in his *Religion in Science and Society* and Salter in his *Ethical Religion* have considered these as the central themes of any religious enquiry. After having surveyed the march of humanity in space and time, Toynbee has come to the conclusion that the practical test of a religion, always and everywhere, is its success or failure in helping human souls to respond to the challenges of suffering and sin.<sup>48</sup>

The ethical part of Sufi teachings is undoubtedly the most important dimension of Sufism. There is much emphasis on compassion, companionship, kindness, generosity, munificence, self-sacrifice (*ithar*), manliness, forgiveness, forbearance, *infaq* (giving away charity), and similar qualities in the treatise on Sufism and in the *malfuzat* and *maktubat* of the Sufi masters.<sup>49</sup>

The Sufis in world have played the same role. They lived in the midst of the lower strata of society and identified themselves with the problems and perplexities of the people. Shaikh Hamid-u’-d-din Sufi lived in Suwal, a small village of Nagaur, like Rajasthani peasants, mixed with people of all castes and creeds and adopted vegetarian habits. Shah Waliullah, in a very illuminating chapter on urban life and

<sup>47</sup> Neeru Misra, op. cit., pp. 22-26.

<sup>48</sup> Engineer Asghar Ali, *The Prophet of non-Violence*, Vitasta Pub. Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2011, p. 155-157

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, pp.155-57.

organization in his *Hujjat Allah al-Baligha*, advocates the peaceful integration of all the components of society and their harmonious functioning to achieve human well-being. In fact, peace and goodwill between human beings was the end all and be all of Sufi endeavors.<sup>50</sup>

Maulana Rumi who represents the Sufi ethics and real spirit like this:<sup>51</sup>

*“Come to me if you are a Jew or Christian or a Muslim or even if you are a sinner as you are all humans.”*

The Sufi saints were anxious to create in society the harmony of a perfect orchestra. Their principle was to return hatred with love, violence with affection. Shaikh Nizam-u’-din Auliya used to recite the following verse of Shaikh Abu Sa’id Abul Khair as his motto in life:<sup>52</sup>

بر که مارا رنجہ دار دراحتش بسیار باد

*“Whoever causes grief to us, May his life get more and more happiness”*

A non-violent approach, sympathy with the weak and the downtrodden and consciousness of a divine mission to bring happiness to the hearts of men characterized the efforts of the Sufi saints of world. They did not indulge in criticism of other customs or practices. They disliked linguistic chauvinism and regarded all languages as different vehicles for the communication of feelings. They helped in the development of regional languages of their nations. They were instrumental in the rise of a common lingua franca. The example is that Turk recites Qur’an their native language in early periods of Sufis and also earliest sentences of Hindi were spoken in the *khanqahs*. In the matter of language, their approach was:<sup>53</sup>

سخن کز بہر دین گوی چه عبرانی سریانی

*“When you are talking about faith what does it matters it whether the words you utter in prayer are Hebrew or Syriac?”*

The Sufi orders, had played an important role in bringing various communities closer and in encouraging the composite culture. It is said that the success of these Sufi saints in Central and South Asia was partly due to their understanding of their society’s conditions, religious attitudes, and the aspirations

<sup>50</sup> Neeru Misra, op. cit., p. 22-24.

<sup>51</sup> Engineer Asghar Ali, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>52</sup> Riazul Islam, op. cit., pp. 324-336.

<sup>53</sup> Zaheer Ahmad Siddiqi, *The Sufi influence and other essays*, Educational book house Aliharh, 1982, p. 48.

of the people. They adopted many customs and ceremonies of different religions in the initial stages of the development of the order, such bowing before the Shaikh, presenting waters to visitors etc. Just imagine a small cottage or monastery with practically no furniture. It is occupied by a Muslim Sufi, clad in a patched mantle or cloak, who lives in it alone, or in the company of four or five of his disciples. We should remember that he neither lives on alms, nor remains aloof from human beings. He and his adherents, after having offered their midnight and morning prayers, hasten to the jungle in order to collect wood for sale, and then return to spend the whole day in devotion to God and service to humanity. At sunrise, you might see his cottage thronged by thousands of men, women and children both Muslims and non-Muslims, of high and low rank, from princess and nobles down to so-called depressed and backward classes asking for his blessings. Meanwhile he hears that one of his non-Muslim neighbor is suffering from some severe contagious disease. He at once gets up with his chief disciples, passes through the reverent crowd, and arriving at the house of his neighbors, inquires into his health and attends on him with warm love and disinterested care.<sup>54</sup>

This is no exaggerated account of the daily routine of Sufi *derives*. We can easily get it verified by studying the biographies of Sufis, such as *Nafha-ul-Uns* by Jami, *Tazkirat-ul-Awliyya* by Attar etc.<sup>55</sup>

Kindness to animals also formed a part of the moral obligation of Sufis, and in their biographies, we come across special instructions pertaining thereto.<sup>56</sup>

We should however, keep in view that, if on one hand the true Sufis humbly served the common folk, they on other hand, deliberately ignored kings and nobles. There is famous saying current among the Sufis.

نعم الامير على باب الفقير وبنس الفقير على باب الامير

"How good is a noble at the door of a faqir, and how bad is a faqir at the door of a noble."<sup>57</sup>

The teaching of Sufis, served as a means for maintaining equilibrium in the Muslim Society, both at the time of its ascendancy and decline. In other words, they

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p. 50.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p.50.

<sup>56</sup> Riazul Islam, op. cit., pp. 324-33.

<sup>57</sup> Zaheer Ahmad Siddiqi, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

prevented the society from materialistic tendencies, peculiar, to a rising nation; and from despondency and pessimism, characteristic of a conquered people.<sup>58</sup>

Sufis motto was service to humanity at large irrespective of caste or creed; they always showed kindness to persons professing other religions. This treatment attracted the latter, and also created a sense of tolerance among Muslims. There is a tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in which he says, "God has laid so much stress on the rights of a neighbor, that the latter almost holds the status of a relative"

Sufi literature is full of these rights and duties towards other human beings especially neighbors, parents etc. Hazrat Mehboob Elahi, so often referred to in his article, says, "The right of a neighbor, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, is that you should advance him a loan, when he requires it, help him when he is in need, visit him, when he is sick, comfort him, when he is involved in trouble, and attend his funeral, when he dies," "He is not a true believer, who annoys his neighbor." Can there be a surer way to the world's peace and tranquility?<sup>59</sup>

Their approach towards human relationships is neatly expressed in the imagery of eyes:

یگانه بودن و یکتا شدن ز چشم آموز  
که بر دو چشم جدا و جدا نمی نگرند

"Learn from the eyes the way to develop unity and oneness. The two eyes appear different but their vision is one."<sup>60</sup>

We have already seen, true Sufis did not accept royal service or *jagir*, nor amassed riches or worldly equipment. Still they did not like to be a burden on the society. When we look at the list of Sufis of the Baghdad, Khurasan, Bukhara, Indian region in say the *Risala* of Imam Qushairi, or the *Tadhkirat ul-Awliya* of Farid-ud-din Attar or in the *Nafahat-ul-Uns* of Maulana ,Abd ur-Rahman Jami,<sup>61</sup> Sufi earned their living by some craft or trade. In *Nafahat ul-Uns*, over fifty professional *nisbah* surnames appear tacked on to the names of the various Sufis. There are all kind of professional, *nisbah*, from the respectable *Zargar* (goldsmith), *,attar* (perfume or drug dealer), *khazzaz*, (silk merchant), *sairaf* (Banker), *jouhari* (jeweller), *warraaq* (copist), to a such lowly ones as *kharraz* (cobbler), *khaffaf* (boot-maker), *na'lain-doz* (clog-maker), *hallaj* (cotton dresser), *sakkak* (cuttler), *juwalgar* (sack maker), *saqqa* (water carrier),

<sup>58</sup> Riazul Islam, op. cit., pp. 216-229.

<sup>59</sup> Zaheer Ahmad Siddiqi, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

<sup>60</sup> Neeru Misra, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>61</sup> Zaheer Ahmad Siddiqi, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

*saqati* (pedlar), *qassab* (butcher), *haddad* (blacksmith), *khawwas* (vendor of palm leaves), *qassar* (fuller), *gazur* (bleacher), *khabbaz* (baker), *haffar* (digger), *kulal* (potter), *sifalfarosh* (seller of earthen wares), *nassaj* (weaver), *sammak* (fish monger), *hammal* (porter), *hajjam* (barber), *falez-ban* (keeper of melon field), *hatter* (cutter), *zaqqaq* (maker of skin bags), *sabbag* (*dyer*), *dabbagh* (*tanner, etc.*)<sup>62</sup> They spent the greater part of their earning on the poor and needy, thus they practically insisted on living on an equal status with the most destitute members of the society. The Muslim society as a rule, never adopted love for riches and money or contempt of poverty or trade, as a national character.<sup>63</sup>

To be brief, if we sum up the entire activities of the great Muslim Sufis, we can do so in two phrases as said by Ghazali:

التعظيم الامر الله والشفقة على خلق الله

*"Reverence to the commandment of God and benevolence to his creatures"*

## Conclusion

Sufism can play a double role in the contemporary world. It can become a constructive part in the political process because, on the one hand, it is capable of "Islamizing" democracy; on the other hand, it is capable of democratizing Islam. It can also contribute to political stability in whole world by bringing about understanding among competing political groups and factions and much-needed tolerance toward other religions, ideas and currents.

From the Sufi literature and poems, we see that Sufism is a subject that works as a social power to bring people together. It is a bridge between different cultures, which, in part, explains Sufis success in almost all parts of the world. Sufis main objective was never to become the leaders of a country, but rather to become its social workers. They blend together with the people of the country and learn its languages. They ease communication among peoples, especially in times past when there were no visa requirements. They embark relationships by intermarriage, and so in many ways built understanding between different kinds of peoples.

The intolerance, chaos, conflict, disharmony and fear in the contemporary global world, make scholars and intellectuals more interested in Sufism. Institution

<sup>62</sup> Riazul Islam, op. cit., pp. 199-200.

<sup>63</sup> Zaheer Ahmad Siddiqi, op. cit., p. 53.

of Sufism, particularly in Europe and America has been established in order to curb mindless terrorism with massive state violence. They admitted that the Islam and Sufi teachings are based on peace and harmony. It also marks the awakening of a fresh quest for harmony and inter-civilization understanding. Some universities are reported to have launched regular courses in Sufism in Indian, Punjab and Lahore, because it supports and favors the humanistic approach.

Fortunately, some Central Asian countries have also realized how important the recovery of Sufi culture is for their societies. It has been notice that some countries like Uzbekistan; there has been an increase in the publishing of works about Sufis such as Baha ud-din Naqshband and Najmuddin Kubra. Most recently in 2004, the state has supported the publishing of an important masterpiece of Central Asian Sufi literature, translating into modern Uzbek Alisher Navai's *The Language of the Birds*. There has even been a governmental public educational attempt to combine the Western concept of "civil society" with recast elements of Sufism. For example, in Uzbekistan, in 1994 a ministry called the "Public Center for Spirituality and Enlightenment" was established.

While concluding it can be said that Sufi values and principles constitute a solid base for a peaceful relationship and co-existence with all, irrespective of their religious choices. It may be noted, however, that authentic and ever lasting peace must to be protected and safeguarded against those who try to destroy it. Real peace does not certainly mean the total absence of use of force or even war as a lesser evil and as a last resort.

Therefore, in promoting religious tolerance and coexistence among the members of multi-culture, multi-religious and in a pluralistic world efforts should be made to understand and then appreciate the essential diversity between the various religions before commemorating their imaginative and misconstrued unity.

Furthermore, since the beginning of the seventh century, Islamic international law has played a significant role in protecting the personal, economic, judicial and political rights of civilians during armed conflicts. It has introduced a human revolution, consisting of a number of human jural principles, as early as fourteen centuries before the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and eight centuries before the appearance of Grotius, the godfather of European international law. These declarations have been acknowledged by a number of European scholars who have emphasized the fact that Islamic international law has made great contributions to international humanitarian law. As a matter of fact, from time to time the substantive postulates of Islamic humanitarian law exceed the

norms decreed by „The Hague and the Geneva Conventions.’ Consequently, the principles of human rights used in international humanitarian law are not only the outcome of Western civilization, but also the occurrences and teachings of non-European peoples, whose traditions have also made great contributions.


There is no doubt; we must understand the fact that Sufism was a product of a feudal society. It was, so to say, feudal humanism. The contemporary social structure is not congenial to the Sufi practices and hence it has nearly disappeared from our socio-religious scene. But it is part of our socio-cultural and religious heritage and must be valued as such. The Sufistic values, though not its practice, are still quite relevant for us as we are torn with communed conflict today.

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## MULTICULTURAL VALUES IN THE NOBLE QURAN AND THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S (S) SUNNAH (*the Prophet's tradition*)

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### ABSTRACT

As we know, multiculturalism denotes a society in which many different cultures co exist. It is a concept aimed at the preservation and development of the cultural diversity of people of different ethnicities and faiths in any country and in the world as a whole and the ethnocultural integration of ethnic minorities. As a crossroads of different civilisations, our ancient homeland Azerbaijan has, for centuries, been known as a country with an established atmosphere of ethnocultural diversity where representatives of different ethnic groups and faiths have lived in an environment of peace, tranquillity and mutual understanding. Multiculturalism and tolerance have historically been a way of life of Azerbaijanis, and today it has become a way of life of every citizen of the Azerbaijani state regardless of their national identity, language or religion. The rich multicultural past of the Azerbaijani people has survived not only in today's tolerant lifestyle of our people, but also in the literary-artistic, scientific-philosophical and political-legal sources and documents created by our people.

In the broad sense, the essence of multiculturalism is that the state does not discriminate against individuals or social groups representing different and unique cultures, does not regard any of them superior or inferior to the others, and grants equal rights to representatives of all cultures.

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## Introduction

Before understanding what multicultural society really means, it would be advantageous to know how this word originated and what shapes and shades this word has acquired through its currency over the years. Multiculturalism is considered a set of policies and practices that promotes attention to and representation for various groups and communities who want to maintain a certain level of distinction for their cultures and identities (Cashmore, 1996; Modood, 2007).

Multiculturalism provides a forum for all individuals to recognize, understand, appreciate, value, and be cognizant of diversity, thereby promoting trust, enhancing communication, and nurturing respect and concern for the welfare of all individuals within the society. Literally the compound term multiculturalism means the idea or principle of having many cultures regardless of being majority or minority. This in no way explains or details out the nature of relations between the cultures in a given society. Tolerance and harmony must be nurtured to safeguard the stability of the country. In many areas tolerance is a commendable virtue. One can be tolerant on non-moral issues like language, skin color, race, etc. Multiculturalism shifted this discourse on race relations towards acceptance of diversity as opposed to its rejection. However, only certain aspects of culture were seen as publicly important: in particular, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender and sexuality. Other differences, such as religion and language, were to be reserved for the private or domestic sphere.

### **Allah, the Exalted, says in the Noble Quran:**

*“O humankind! We created you from a male and a female (Adam and Eve). Then We made you into peoples and tribes that you may know (recognise) one another. The most honourable of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. (1, Surah Al-Hujurat, 13).*

In the Noble Quran, Our Almighty Lord says the humankind has originated from one father and one mother and there is no room for racial or ethnic discrimination among people, as they will be assessed for their piety and morality in the sight of Allah.

As you know, moral principles hold an important place in the religion of Islam. Multicultural values carry a special significance and weight among these moral principles. According to Islam, tolerant attitude means treating others gently, having good intentions towards them, and avoiding racial, ethnic or religious

discrimination. Multiculturalism is also characterised as manifestation of tolerance, which is commended in Islam as well. That is, mutual understanding, friendship and collaboration between people is impossible without multiculturalism.

There is a reason that our holy religion is called “Islam”, which means “peace, safety and tranquillity”, as it comes from its friendly and kind attitude towards representatives of other religions and ethnic groups.

### Islamic Identity

The word “Islam” means both peace and submission. A Muslim, therefore, is a person who submits to his or her Lord peacefully. As, “There is no God but Allah, and that Mohammed is the last messenger of God. Bearing witness to or declaring this testimony is a key to the Islamic faith. This worldview provides a ground of unity for Muslim communities. At the same time, it may pose challenges in forming and fostering a Muslim identity in multicultural, predominantly secular societies.

Being the last heavenly religion, Islam has established people’s freedom of life and conscience, informed that everyone will account for their actions to Almighty Allah, and stated that there is no compulsion in choosing one’s faith. Allah, the Exalted, declares the absence of compulsion in religion as follows: **“There shall be no compulsion in religion”** (1, Surah Al-Baqarah, 256).

As seen from the above ayah, there is no compulsion in the spirit of the heavenly religions sent by Allah, because coercion, forcing someone to accept any religious belief is contrary to the fundamental principles of the heavenly religions. We can see this in the Torah and the Bible, as well as in the relevant ayahs of the Noble Quran. Perhaps, Islam highlights this matter even more than the other religions. That is, our Almighty Lord puts it openly by declaring that **“there is no compulsion in religion”**. Based on this ayah, we can say that our religion is categorically against imposing its rituals on others and gives them complete freedom in terms of faith.

The ayah of the Noble Quran given below proves that Islam has been tolerant towards synagogues and churches, the places of worship of the followers of these two religions (Jews and Christians). In this ayah, Allah, the Exalted, says: **“...Had Allah not repelled the aggression of some people (polytheists) by means of others (believers), cloisters (monasteries inhabited by monks), churches, temples (Jewish synagogues) and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is much invoked, would have been destroyed...”** (1, Surah Ah-Haj, 40).

Also, Muslim identity is founded on faith and the practices can be found in the cultural expressions of Muslim communities. Such as: “Assalamu Alaikum,” a greeting meaning “Peace be upon you,” are universal among Muslims. “Bismillah,” or “In the name of God,” when starting anything, is a common preface to any declaration. “Alhamdulillah,” means “thanks to God,” a phrase used if someone is responding to a greeting or whenever one accomplishes a task. “Insha Allah”, or “God willing”, is said when referring to a future undertaking. These terms and many others go beyond race, ethnicity, nationality and even one’s level of faith, practice, or tendencies towards traditionalism, fundamentalism, and modernism. These phrases are all in Arabic. However, they are now part of the Muslim lexicon and generally are used by Muslims all over the world irrespective of what language they speak. Some may use the Arabic version while others may translate to their local languages. However, they all understand what is meant by the terms.

As you can see, Islam regards tolerance, genial attitude towards representatives of other religions and ethnicities, as well as tolerance towards the religious and ethnic diversity in society as key elements of faith. In the sixth ayah of Surah Al Kafirun of the Noble Quran, the Almighty Creator says: **“For you is your religion, and for me is my religion”**. This ayah clearly shows that people may hold different beliefs and opinions, and how those people are to be treated.

If we look at the history, we can see that Christians and Jews, as well as representatives of other religions and ethnicities have always co-existed in our country. As admitted by Western researchers, they have not lived as prosperously in their own country as in our country. Our Muslim people have taken them under their wing and protected them, but have never forced them to accept Islam. They have had separate schools and practiced their own religious rituals and holidays freely. This means that we, people, are children of one father and one mother, and no faith, sect, denomination or national identity can separate us from one another. If the proof is the Noble Quran, which Muslims believe in and which was sent by Allah, our Quran invites us to unity and also says that Allah’s Jannah (paradise) and Jahannam (hell) are for all people. The Noble Quran addresses this matter as follows:

**“Those among believers, Jews, Christians and Sabaeans, who believe in Allah and the Last Day and do righteousness, will have their reward with their Lord; they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve”** (1, Surah Al-Baqarah, 62). Another ayah goes as follows: **“Those among believers, Jews, Sabaeans and Christians, who believe in Allah and the Last Day and do righteousness, shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve”** (1, Surah Al-Maidah, 69).

Unfortunately, the enemies of Muslim ummah (community) strive to destroy the faith and culture of Muslims and bring them under their yoke and sometimes they are successful at it. They induce Muslims, who follow Western traditions under the name of culture and development, to look at their religion as backward, inconsistent with fashion, etc. Intellectuals play no small role in this regard. They express opinions or write articles and books that are ignorant and cause controversy among Muslims lacking expertise and deep knowledge in the field of religion, and by doing so, they serve the enemy, maybe without knowing it. Nowadays, everyone has education, much or little, i.e. there is no uneducated person. Therefore, it is every Muslim's duty to submit to the only Allah and obey His commands in order to find the truth.

Not everyone's knowledge is enough for them to attain bliss. Therefore, there is a need for a guide, who is superior to intellect and gives strength to intellect. Humans need divine revelation, i.e. a guide sent down by Allah, who has created humans, sees their shortcomings, knows their grieves and needs, and has a solution for them all. Prophets (peace be upon them) were sent to meet these needs. **"Mankind were one community. Allah sent unto them messengers as bringers of good tidings and warnings (of retributory punishment) and sent down the Scripture with the truth to judge between mankind concerning that in which they differed. And only those unto whom the Scripture was given differed (concerning religion), after clear proofs had come unto them, through hatred (jealousy) among themselves..."** (1, Surah Al-Baqarah, 213).

Some ayahs of Quran underline that the religion of truth sent by Allah shall triumph over all religions and systems and ignorance shall be replaced by divine order: **"Who is more unjust than one who invents about Allah untruth (who calls His messenger a magician) while he is being invited to Islam? Allah does not guide the evil-doing people to the right path. They want to put out the light of Allah (the religion of Islam) with their mouths (their slanders and evil words), but Allah will perfect His light (religion), although the disbelievers dislike it. It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance (Quran) and the religion of truth to manifest it (Islam) over all religions, although those who associate others with Allah dislike it!"** (1, Surah As-Saf, 7-9).

As seen from the ayahs, our holy religion prohibits insulting others and a Muslim person must treat all people with respect, because respecting someone means honouring and cherishing them. The Noble Quran refers to the creature called human being as honourable. That is, Allah, the Exalted, says: **"Verily we have honoured the Children of Adam"** (5, Surah Al-Isra, 70). So, since the Noble

Quran calls humans honourable, everyone should value and respect one another regardless of their religion or nationality. In this sense, Muslims visit the places of worship of non-Muslims and participate in their holidays, because our religion has granted freedom of faith and worship to everyone. Their worship and religious holidays should be respected and disunity should be avoided. Of course, a Muslim does not harm anyone or try to persuade someone into leaving their religion and converting to Islam. A Muslim does not argue with anyone. He (she) talks to everyone with a smile and nicely. This is because the phenomenon of interfaith peace and life based on peace is a key moral principle of Islam, and as we can see from the ayahs above, this is clearly emphasised in a number of ayahs of Quran in different ways, while the notion of interfaith peace and life based on peace was completely alien to the humanity 1400 years ago. With the revelation of the Noble Quran, religious wars (e.g. Crusades) seen in some religions and stemming from the difference in faith are considered meaningless. Quran prohibits hatred and enmity against followers of other religions. Therefore, betraying others is not and has never been a religious method in Islam.

### Core elements of Muslim Identities

While it is true that Islam provides Muslims with a unique system that caters to all aspects of life, it is also true that followers of the faith are highly diverse individuals and groups that sometimes appear to be very different in all aspects of their beliefs and behavior. In addition to all of the above, Islam invites the followers of other religions to unity and addresses them as follows: **“Say (O Prophet), “O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable (not different) between us and you: that we will worship none but Allah and not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords (to ourselves) instead of Allah”. But if they turn away again, then say (to them), “Bear witness that verily we are Muslims (those who have submitted to Allah)!”** (1, Surah Ali Imran, 64). This is one of the most well-known ayahs that invite the People of the Scripture to unity. The evidence brought by this ayah is different than that of other ayahs. The preceding ayahs make a direct invitation to Islam. Whereas, this ayah refers to the common points between Islam and People of the Scripture. According to the logic of this ayah, if non-Muslims do not cooperate with Muslims for their sacred purposes, then Muslims should at least attract them towards the common points between the religions and ultimately unite for the sake of sacred purposes. I should also note that since the motives of Islam are based on logic, evidence and peaceful methods, the Noble Quran recommends participation in debates using reason and logic. According to Islam, it is important to speak kindly and justly even against

superstitious and idolatrous religions, because beliefs and rituals of all ethnic groups should be respected, and because cursing and bad attitude will only make them even more attached to their beliefs and give rise to resentment in between. Therefore, the Noble Quran successfully prevents such resentment from arising by commanding as follows: **“Do not insult those who invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah wrongfully without knowledge** (for having no respect or esteem for Allah). **Thus, unto each community have We made their deed seem pleasing** (We have made believers’ actions done for the sake of Allah appear good to them, and disbelievers’ evil actions also appear good to them). **Then to their Lord is their return, and He (Allah) shall inform them of what they used to do!”** (1, Surah Al Anam, 108).

It should be particularly noted that, in fact, there is no different between the main subjects of all heavenly scriptures and they pursue the same goal: educational and moral evolution of human being. But each new religion is more upgraded and more comprehensive.

Besides showing respect and esteem for the previous prophets and scriptures, Quran affirms their original meaning and says: **“And unto thee (O Prophet) have We revealed the Scripture with the truth (Quran), confirming the scripture** (all divine scriptures) **that came before it and guarding it in safety** (as a witness to their authenticity). **Judge between them by what Allah has revealed (Quran). Do not follow their vain desires deviating from what has come to you of the truth. We have assigned a law and a path to each of you. Had Allah willed, He would have made you one single community** (submitting to the same law), **but this (diversity) is for Allah to test you in what He has given you. So, try to outdo** (compete with) **one another in good deeds. To Allah is your ultimate return all together. He (Allah) will inform you of that in which you differ!”** (1, Al-Maidah, 48).

In addition to the Noble Quran, our Prophet’s (peace be upon him) hadiths (sayings and traditions) also recommend multicultural values and kind treatment of representatives of other religions and ethnic groups. In particular, the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave the following advice to his dear companion Abu Dharr before his demise: **“O Abu Dharr, I prohibit you from separating from your friends and brothers, because deeds are never accepted separately”** (3, page 32).

As we know, the society, in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) lived, was practising idolatry. Like the previous prophets, he was conducting a struggle against them to establish monotheism. For this reason, he was constantly assaulted, tortured and oppressed. In hadiths, we can clearly see the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) attitude towards and treatment of the followers of other religions in his

attitude towards Jews and Christians. The Noble Quran already makes frequent mentions of Judaism and Christianity due to them being heavenly religions. It calls Jews and Christians "People of the Scripture".

After his hijra (migration) to Medina, the Prophet (peace be upon him) firstly settled the disputes among Arab tribes and secured peace among them. He then established ties with Jews, who had population and economic power. In one of his hadiths, he says as follows: "O people! I advise you to be obedient and to be together with people, because this is the rope that Allah commands (you to cling to). There are so many things in being together with people that you dislike, but have more benefit than what you like as a firqah (group, sect)" (4). In another hadith, he encourages living together with people by saying: "Allah likes three things in you, and dislikes three. The three things He likes in you are: worshipping Him only; not associating anyone with Him; and, clinging only to His rope all together. The three things He dislikes in you are: arguing and gossiping; asking a lot of questions; and, squandering your wealth" (4).

Touching on the importance of unity in another hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) says as follows: "Do not fall into discord, because those that came before you perished for falling into discord" (2, page 89).

The Prophet's (peace be upon him) respect for the religions and rituals of the followers of other faiths regardless of their religion is a unique example in human history. One day in Medina, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stood up when a Jewish funeral procession was passing by. People said it was a non-Muslim and Jewish funeral. Having heard this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Stand up when you see a funeral procession!" By saying so, he stresses that death is thought provoking and the deceased, regardless of their religion, is a human being and should be respected by everyone, thus drawing attention to the necessity of unity and solidarity among people: "Unity is indispensable to you. Undoubtedly, Allah's hand is over unity and solidarity. Allah will unite my community only on the path of guidance" (3, page 33).

We need to promote an Islamic approach to multiculturalism that is based on learning from others, as well as, teaching others to create new possibilities. This approach acknowledges the common values, but it also urges people to recognize differences through mutual respect and spirit of "knowing to be known". The approach is rooted on a verse in the Qur'an that reads: "O mankind! Indeed, we have created you from male and female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another---"(Qur'an: 49:13).

## Conclusion

We conclude from the above ayahs and hadiths that Muslims has experience of living together with people of different religions from the very first days of Islam. By proclaiming that “**there is no compulsion in religion**”, Quran has helped to continue peaceful relations with the followers of other faiths. It is therefore that Jews, Christians and representatives of other religions have been able to live freely and without any difficulty in every Muslim-majority region, because according to Islam, the future of humanity is the humans themselves, who therefore are the biggest value. All religions have been sent for humans.

It is worth reminding that representatives of different religions, different ethnic groups and peoples have lived in an atmosphere of friendship and brotherhood in Azerbaijan for centuries. In today’s complicated geopolitical climate, multicultural values are more important than anything. Mutual recognition and acceptance of cultural differences is the main path to progress and prosperity. Multiculturalism and tolerance have become a way of life of every citizen of Azerbaijan. I’d also like to emphasise that multiculturalism plays a crucial role not only in the cultural development of people and resolution of national minorities’ problems, but also in the development of interstate relations and ensuring of transparency. This all boils down to our commitment to our religious values, Quran and the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) sunnah. Let us all heed to these blessed calls of our religion and respond to them positively!

The Almighty Allah tells us: “**Hold firmly to the rope (religion, Quran) of Allah all together and do not separate** (from one another by becoming divided into groups)! **Remember the favour of Allah upon you: when you were enemies, He brought your hearts together** (through Islam) **and you became brothers by His grace.**” (1, Surah Ali Imran, 103).

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.


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## SCIENTIFIC INTERVIEW:

### INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR ALI H. RADDAOUI ON HIS TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN MULTICULTURAL CLASSES

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Our guest is Professor Ali H. Raddaoui, has served as a teacher and researcher at several tertiary institutions in different countries such as Tunisia, the USA, and Saudi Arabia. In most of these institutions, awareness of the multicultural component constitutes a critical piece of their visions and values. Multiculturalism and multicultural education have gathered momentum in contemporary educational circles. Hence, academic institutions attempt to meet the challenging requirements of the new dimensions of complexity and practicality as ethnic demographics, social conditions, and political circumstances continue to change. The emergence of new technologies in education, together with the increasing cultural diversity of global educational contexts, has created a vibrant mix of cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and experiential plurality. In this context, the appraisal of collective and individual experiences of teaching and learning within multicultural settings looms large in contemporary academia.

Dr. Raddaoui's academic career offered him genuine opportunities to experience multicultural education from his perspectives as a teacher, educator, researcher, and a world citizen. Rather than providing generalizations on multicultural education, Dr. Raddaoui takes his English teaching career as a starting point and shares his experience with multiculturalism from this specific angle. Recently, he has moved to the private sector and has founded IDIOMOPTIMA. This project reflects his multilingual and multicultural identity and offers language services in the three world languages: Arabic, French, and English.

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**HZ: Welcome, Dr. Raddaoui. Please introduce yourself and your research.**

**AHR:** Except for a few digressions from my path as a scholar-cum-practitioner, my research and scholarly activities have consistently focused on three interconnected areas that I summarize as follows: (i) language pedagogy, (ii) researcher identity, and (iii) the impacts of globalization and technology on education. My training is primarily in applied linguistics with special emphasis on language teaching and learning. Throughout my career, I have taught three world languages, Arabic, French, and mostly English to speakers of other languages. In my research, I approach the issues above from the vantage points of my multiple identities as a learner, teacher, and researcher. I critically consider the targets, tools, and implications of (language) learning and teaching in an interconnected, multicultural world.

For the most part, my research dwells on best practices in language teaching. In doing this, my goal has been to re-conceptualize, amid a theoretic and pedagogic glut, what I believe are worthy learning goals, strategies, and methods. Since the mid-seventies, Communicative Language Teaching occupied pride of a place in English language teaching circles. Without questioning its merit as a language teaching agenda, I argue against considering it a sacred cow in the language teacher's toolbox, and I call for integrating creative and critical thinking, Bloom's taxonomy, and Webb's Depth of Knowledge levels into language teaching pedagogy and curriculum design. Teachers should expend pedagogic and theoretic language teaching energy to develop strategies that mirror the psychological processes in the learner's mind and the learning that take place within and across communities. For me, the supreme goal of language learning is to develop written, oral (and now digital) fluency. This fluency is the ticket for learners to become producers, to represent themselves, and to contribute their own images to the already extant global kaleidoscope.

With the research agenda above, which is mostly focused on language pedagogy in the confines of the classroom, I have worked on a larger programmatic plan where I think critically about my job and identity as an English language learner turned teacher in the global marketplace. The issues I debated center on the privileged place of the native speaker of English as a norm setter both in theoretical linguistic analysis as well as in the applied branch concerned with English Language Teaching (ELT) as a profession and as a business. Learners, parents, linguists, recruiters, and publishers base the teaching of English on this standard. The vertical and horizontal global spread of English outside its traditional habitats competes against this perception. It militates against this presumably homogeneous,

normative representation. Nonnative speakers, teachers, and users of English generate variation and change and have become a strong force to be reckoned with. I go against the grain and argue against the traditional view of language as being encapsulated in a perfect, monolingual speaker of English, and delineate the contours of the intercultural, ‚ideal speaker‘ in the global village who is a proud speaker of their native language, but also is intercultural and bi/multilingual.

Globalization brings to the fore more than language and language education issues. For me, a central area of investigation has been to describe, examine, and ponder another impact of globalization, which is the import of technologically-enhanced learning. As teachers of language and of any other content area, we owe it to ourselves to tame the ‚technology beast‘ and not let ourselves be overpowered by it. We need to strike this emerging interdisciplinary balance between our content areas and technology while preventing technology from becoming the centerpiece and driver of our professions.

It is interesting to note that on a world scale, technological gadgets, e-learning, and social media have found easier and wider adoption outside education and at the social level. The effects of technological proliferation are staggering. The previous paradigm, where information, content authoring, and knowledge production were monopolized by elites in religion, education, science, and publishing, has suddenly shifted. Regular, networked netizens, have become in possession of powerful tools resulting in what appears to be a democratizing trend of knowledge construction.

In much of my research, I observe, describe, and ask critical questions about my profession, its goals, and its tools. I also reflect on my place and identity as a reflective practitioner. This has led me to investigate the broader theoretical and practical implications of language learning and teaching for linguistic standards, pedagogies, and goals in the classroom and in the global village, taking account of the massive transformations globalization and technology are effecting at the levels of formal teaching and the largely unmonitored social e-learning.

**HZ: What sparked your interest in the multiculturalism field, and research and academia in general?**

**AHR:** I am a trained English language teacher. Learning about, adapting, and experimenting with new pedagogies, approaches, theories, and methods is my mantra. However, being a nonnative speaker of English myself, I found out, early on in my career, that learners, administrators, and parents expect the learning of

English to be equated with learning about things English, American, maybe Australian, things from what the late Indian linguist Braj Kachru called ‚the inner circle’. Approaching the teaching of English with the promise that they learn essentially native-speaker English is not only limiting, but also socially irresponsible. If English is to be the lingua franca of the world, then for the education system, curriculum writers, textbook developers, and teachers to sell this international medium of communication as being restricted to the English of the inner circle is a non-starter. The teaching of English has to borrow from intercultural and multicultural education in a way that makes it serve as a language of international communication.

### **HZ: Describe your teaching experience. What is your teaching philosophy?**

**AHR:** Perhaps another reason why I am a firm believer in pushing multicultural education and the notion of the intercultural speaker is that during my teaching career, I have worked in four continents and was exposed to teaching practices in six countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, and America. Here is how I typically introduce myself on various occasions, including my job applications: I am a dependable, mission-oriented, multilingual, Arab-American academic with a multicultural outlook developed over many years of teaching, living, and serving in diverse linguistic and cultural locales. Having learned and taught three world languages, Arabic, English, and French, I know that language learning, devoid of the cultural element, almost always produces people who may be good at stringing words to make correct sentences. However, teaching culture-free language courses is a non-sequitur. Language is host to cultural meanings that partly determine how we see and dissect the world, near and far. Such a conception of language, though, is not enough, for it assumes that the language taught has a corresponding homogeneous speech community. There is nothing farther from the truth. There is standard language, and there are the dialects of the language. However much we may want to think of the dialects as falling under that one specific standard language, it will be difficult to ascertain that the speakers of those dialects closely associate themselves with the speakers of the standard language or even the speakers of other dialects. At the periphery, one language in country x finds its extension in country y, but it happens to have a different name. In fact, one language may find reverberations and echoes in faraway places, locales, and countries, with the implication that it has become the carrier of different cultures, to the extent, as I said, of even acquiring a different name.

My teaching is guided by several principles and theories that I continually strive to put in practice, observe, analyze and critique to continue to improve my teaching

and to make sure it is never boxed in a limited, fixed, formula-type recipe. I often refer to myself as a facilitator, educator, and coach, an intercultural speaker, rather than as a teacher or instructor. Instead of telling learners about things to remember and reproduce, as is often done in the transmission model, I aim to create a comfortable and encouraging atmosphere of interaction and communication with no place for any type of threat. In all of this, I hope to stand as an example of someone whose questions are answered through negotiation rather than through decree and dictation. I always take account of the fact that students in many of my classes come from diverse backgrounds and carry with them *Vetanchuangs* they are most privy to. This is an excellent opportunity to entice them to share their views with others, to explain them, and, most importantly, to celebrate them. In this way, my class sort of becomes and multicultural lab where there is not a dominant group or streak, but as much as possible, students are given privileged access to each other's cultures.

For me as an educator, I take it upon myself to provide them with the necessary props and scaffolds so they can go beyond their current state of knowledge. In this exercise, they learn to value the results of free guided thinking and the importance of their own prior knowledge and experience. When learners are thus appreciated for what they know, they tend to treat themselves and their peers as legitimate and worthy sources of knowledge, and it is this knowledge that they will stir, describe, enrich, formulate and present so they learn to represent themselves, their cultures, and the world around them. This ability to represent and self-represent is most conducive to creating a multicultural environment.

### **HZ: What is your perception of multicultural education?**

**AHR:** Multicultural education is an opportunity to break the monotony of a syllabus that is almost always designed by experts who see the world through the prism of their single, limited, and limiting area of specialization. Central to my understanding of multicultural education is the very concept of dividing the learner's syllabus at any grade into separate classes. Students study physics, geography, biology, physical education, poetry, philosophy, etc. Still, they and their teachers, because of the grip of traditional education, tend to see these disciplines almost as islands that do not have bridges linking them. The fact of the matter is that it is difficult to become an expert in an area without being able to create linkages with other areas of knowledge. Also, it is impossible to think of human scientific endeavor in the absence of how this endeavor is lived by those who carry it forward. Knowledge and knowledge construction take place in cultures and in communities. For 21st-century education to succeed, we must make sure students

understand not only raw scientific and knowledge concepts, but also embed them in their cultural settings while recognizing that there is not one dominant cultural setting, but a kaleidoscope of settings which help us see practice in context.

**HZ: Describe what you enjoy about teaching multicultural students, and why?**

**AHR:** Correctly conceived, teaching a class of students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds is no less than fulfilling, psychologically, pedagogically, socially, and culturally. There is a syllabus. The syllabus, as I just said, is almost always constructed by experts in the area. So, it is awash with the knowledge that is deemed essential to acquire in that particular field. Having multicultural students in mind and building on a multicultural mindset espoused by the teacher are together going to take understanding, learning, and ownership of the body of knowledge integrated into the syllabus into a whole new level of acquisition and appropriation. For example, by way of warming up the class for a particular lesson or concept, the teacher encourages their students to draw into their respective cultures and talk about the connection between the lesson per se and the understandings, customs, and practices held dear by the members of the students' communities. Managing to elicit three or four answers to such a question is going to enrich the class. It gives those answering the question the feelings that their knowledge is appreciated and that their perceptions of the concept are formally shared with other communities. It may be that there are students among those who are listening who find it challenging to understand pure concepts. Still, the very fact that this concept is being brought to life and made significant from a different cultural perspective is going to help with the saliency of that concept in the sense that, from now on, it is going to be associated with a unique event, which is the sharing of how the concept is practiced by members of other cultural communities.

**HZ: How do you approach culturally-sensitive topics in your lecture?**

**AHR:** There are several ways to approach culturally-sensitive topics. Primarily, if the ground rules are laid out from the very beginning, the discomfort associated with culturally-sensitive materials is mitigated. This starts with an initial conversation that the classroom is an open space to discuss all aspects of culture, but this needs to be relativized. As human beings, we are, for the most part, enculturated into believing that the way we practice the cultural components, rites, symbols, and lives is privileged and is a given. It stands to reason that we think of it as correct and standard, and any deviation from this behavior is what it is: a deviation. When students learn to suspend their judgments, to agree to read a text, watch a video, or listen to a text, or listen to a guest speaking about a particular way

of celebrating, mourning, eating, dressing, marrying, and whatnot, then, the scene is already set for the materials (text, audio, video, live presentation) to be shared, for questions to be asked, for looking at what both is common and specific. It seems to me that a wider, more encompassing understanding is arrived at by all. Questions about differences should be permitted, and opinions voiced, without belittling anyone, or imposing a standard version for others to comply with. This is an exercise in mental latitude for the students and the teacher, and it requires a fair amount of training.

**HZ: Describe what has been difficult in teaching multicultural students?**

**AHR:** In many teaching circumstances in any given country, there is always a dominant view or a cultural code of conduct dictated by the dominant group. It is safe to assume that in such contexts, there will be a large number of students who “naturally” adopt the view/practice/understanding prevailing in that society, or who have been forced to adopt it since that’s the etiquette followed by the successful group. As a corollary, we will assume the existence of minority groups in that class. They may be minoritized on account of language, race, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status, and what have you. The problem, in this case, may arise from introducing aspects of minority cultural practices. This would require the students of the ‘dominant culture’ to be trained into suspending judgments and wearing different binoculars with which they can see, inspect, understand, and eventually accept and celebrate other practices respected by members of that same class who are in the minority. This takes a lot of training and getting used to. Here too, there may be difficulty presenting minority views because it seemingly takes a lot of courage on the part of the culturally minoritized students to come forth and to represent their own practices without fear of being further marginalized or mocked.

**HZ: What is the nature of students and the learning process, and how should learning experiences and relationships be organized?**

**AHR:** We could conceive of the learning process as something of linguistic, cognitive, and cultural developmental labs. As a teacher, you have before you a set of students who have been entrusted to your care by the educational and managerial system, by their future employers, by their parents. I hate to liken the process to educational engineering, but it is mostly your own profile as a teacher and another profile you have developed of your ideal student that guide your teaching. So long as your teaching is egalitarian, democratic, all-inclusive, and culturally-sensitive, as a teacher, you will do your best to enlarge each student’s purview and to enlarge the cultural purview of your students as a collectivity, so

they learn to grow and work with each other, regardless of their cultural differentials. You will be a successful teacher when you impart to your students the idea that cultural differences are not only to be accepted but also to be celebrated. Today's and tomorrow's world citizens should assume that diversity is the number one rule of the game. I am not saying that living in a cultural makeup that is largely similar to one's makeup is not desirable; it is indeed desirable, and representing it to the rest of the world is desirable too, but we should learn to interact, do business with, like, and indeed appreciate other modes of life in the conduct of teaching, learning, working, thinking, and making meaning – with the other.

**HZ: What do you think about reflections of multicultural education on raising teacher?**

**AHR:** Teacher education from a multicultural perspective is where it all starts. Here, reference is made to the human teacher, not to a culture-free robot. The learning process is a triangle with three points: the curriculum, the teacher, and the learner. The includes organizing principles, ministerial decrees, textbooks, teacher training programs, and actual exercises in the textbook or e-book. The student comes to class with much background knowledge that the teacher should capitalize on to the greatest extent possible. This background knowledge comes in all sizes and shapes, and it is eminently culturally-grounded. It is the teacher, however, that serves as a mediator between the curriculum and the student. If the teacher is not imbued in multicultural education, their teaching will be confined to traditional, subject-specific knowledge, and this will deny students a voice in the learning process. This is why teacher training and retraining remains a crucial aspect of any evolution of education in the direction of embedding multiculturalism in the curriculum.

**HZ: In which ways do you aim to diversify the readings and literature to represent the ethnic backgrounds of your students?**

**AHR:** Given that there is no such thing as a homogeneous community, I, as a teacher, should be mindful of how cultural minority students perceive the world around them. With the plethora of materials now available, much more so than in the past, there is no dearth of materials that I can draw into to make sure there is equal representation of all student backgrounds in my class. Even if the syllabus is constructed in such a manner as to allow little or no multiculturalism, my schedule of activities should comprise elements that create a juster world where no one is relegated to a secondary position. Any concept has a history, a standard version of history, and various versions of local histories and accounts. Somewhere on this

world-wide-web is a text, a document, a picture, a graph, a video representing that concept. In practical terms, part of my job will be to unearth these gems and put them on the discussion table. However, what I know is dangerously limited, and I am not the only source of wisdom or knowledge in the group congregating around me as a teacher. Each student, each face, each name, is a repository of knowledge and practices that are often submerged, pushed back, and thwarted by mainstream culture. My job will be to nurture a learning atmosphere where my students dig deep into their knowledge, are proud of it, and learn to introduce it before others, to examine it, and to let others examine it.

**HZ: What do you think about the process of designing a multicultural model in education?**

**AHR:** Designing multicultural education should be both a bottom-up and a top-down process. If we accept to wait for multiculturalism to become an educator's household item, on its own, by itself, and to become the accepted, standard, mainstream practice, we may be in for a long wait. At some point, multicultural education has to be decreed and enshrined in the process of education, curriculum design, teacher training activities, and actual classroom practice. On the theoretical front, funds should be allocated, so this new model is introduced on a large scale, explained, vulgarized, and theorized in a way that is accessible to most stakeholders. How the concept is highlighted bottom-up comes in the classroom activities. Teachers who may be implementing this kind of curriculum even without giving it a name should be recognized and rewarded, and their practices demonstrated and publicized. Students, too, should be involved in this program. All students, those belonging to minority or dominant cultures, should be supported and recognized.

**HZ: In your experience, what are the key factors that contribute to the success of students from diverse backgrounds?**

**AHR:** My starting point in answering this question about what mostly contributes to the success of students from diverse backgrounds is that "We're all in this together". By this, I mean that to nurture the ideal multicultural profile among students, we should adopt an attitude that defines success not only as individual but also collective. As a teacher, educator, administrator, parent, textbook designer, I should think that for a liberal view of the world to prevail, I should not think of education as a competition ring where my job as a teacher is to surpass the performance of other teachers and that my success as a student means that I am on top of the list. In today's global world, we live together, and my personal success

should not be measured by failure elsewhere. On Noah's proverbial multicultural education ark, all cultures should exist, co-exist on equal footing, and learn from each other. Beyond injecting the multicultural aspect in the syllabus and course description of each discipline, should embed multiculturalism and have it as a guiding principle in the very inception of the syllabus. In more practical terms, the instructors, too, should be retrained, so they incorporate the kind of education that marginalizes or minoritizes no one and no group.

**HZ: I sincerely thank Professor Raddaoui for sharing your unique and insightful experience with the audience of the International Journal of Multiculturalism. I would like to think that there are valuable lessons to be learned from your engaging and wide-ranging journey. Thank you for the opportunity to interview, Professor.**

**AHR:** Thank you.

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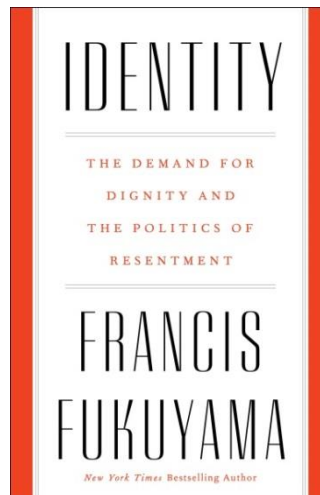
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## BOOK REVIEW: IDENTITY: THE DEMAND FOR DIGNITY AND THE POLITICS OF RESENTMENT



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Identity is an urgent and necessary book—a sharp warning that unless we forge a universal understanding of human dignity, we will doom ourselves to continuing conflict. In 2014, Francis Fukuyama wrote that American institutions were in decay, as the state was progressively captured by powerful interest groups. Two years later, his predictions were borne out by the rise to power of a series of political outsiders whose economic nationalism and authoritarian tendencies threatened to destabilize the entire international order. These populist nationalists seek direct charismatic connection to “the people,” who are usually defined in narrow identity terms that offer an irresistible call to an in-group and exclude large parts of the population as a whole. Demand for recognition of one’s identity is a master concept that unifies much of what is going on in world politics today. The universal recognition on which liberal democracy is based has been increasingly challenged by narrower forms of recognition based on nation, religion, sect, race, ethnicity, or gender, which have resulted in anti-immigrant populism, the upsurge of politicized Islam, the fractious “identity liberalism” of college campuses, and the emergence of white nationalism. Populist nationalism, said to be rooted in economic motivation, actually springs from the demand for recognition and therefore cannot simply be satisfied by economic means. The demand for identity cannot be transcended; we must begin to shape identity in a way that supports rather than undermines democracy.

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## Structure

This book is a succinct analysis of what is going on with the middle class in many democracies and in the pseudo-democracies like Russia. It is a work on a capital topic because nowadays we see the rise of far-right wingers with Nazis symbols even in places like Russia. Indeed, a fascist type of nationalism is in effect in several Western societies for many reasons and it could be a serious threat to our psychological and social well-being. There is a phenomenon of violence in those nationalistic political movements. Racism, the little brother of nationalism, is a growing sentiment and attitude in many democratic societies. Multiculturalism is a threat for the ultranationalists because it is the ideal political philosophy for the pluralistic members of a given society; it allows the democratic citizens to envision an egalitarian society and to develop an egalitarian behavior among themselves. Pluralism is the socle of a contemporary society that respects people from the four corners of the world. However, this view is not accepted by all. Some promote assimilation others believe in integration, which are not the same. Francis Fukuyama is an ardent promoter of assimilationist approach. That is why I reacted negatively to certain aspects of his book, which is essentially excellent.

## Content

To begin with, at his preface and introduction parts, Fukuyama, whom is an American, speaks about the phenomenon of Donald Trump and the rise of right-wing populism in the USA. But for him, it is not “an” American movement. It is a world movement. There is a clear fascist movement that is evolving in several societies. With Donald Trump, there is also Vladimir Putin, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Rodrigo Duterte, and Jaroslav Kaczynski. What these men have in common is their claim that democracy does not work. Nevertheless, in a world that people have become more educated and more aware of what is going on, it seems that the same people have chosen democracy as a political system. Effectively, in 1970, there were 35 democracies and in 2000, it had reached the number of 120 democracies. So why is there a rise of ultranationalists in many democratic societies? Firstly, decolonization has allowed the international world to have new producers with new merchantmen. We all know who the great winner at this game is: China. The companies that were producing have left North America and Western Europe to Asia and sometimes South America. The main consequence -for the nation-states that have seen companies leaving to establish themselves overseas- is the anxiety of an exceptionally good existence that became a horrific one. For instance, in the USA, with less job for the middle class, it also meant less money and fewer opportunities. Often, these middle class folks, more or less understand the impact of globalization

on them, and, they develop an attitude of resentment, firstly, towards their political elite which is considered to be selfish; then, towards the immigrants that are doing the jobs that they do not want to do; and finally, against nations that may be economically successful. In Russia, Putin has tried to reinvigorate the nation financially and militarily. Russia wants to become the superpower that it once was.

The basis of that Russian political agenda is the money from gas and oil that they have within their own border. About other fascist tendencies governments, they are simply trying to gain a financial place for themselves. To invigorate their nationals, they are providing them with ultranationalist discourses such as trying to negate their historical racism towards a group: a good example here is Poland and its citizens, and their racist views and acts against their Jewish community before the German invasion of 1939. Overall, for Fukuyama this is the era of "dignity politics"! Good jobs are not there anymore and, it is threatening because it is the maker of status and it buys respect. Money makes you feel like to be someone. The middle class citizens wants to be recognized by others in their society; they are afraid of being socially marginalized; they despised the new incomers, the new citizens because they know that they might be better than them at surviving at that new society. They envy them a lot because they see them working hard and growing well financially. The new incomers often come with another culture or religion, so they look like they will not assimilate. These differences are matter of resentment too. My hypothesis here is the fact that the Westerners like to claim that they have abandoned the state of being tribal; but my enduring claim is the fact that, the sociopolitical sentiment and ideology of tribalism have never been abandoned by the Westerners. What has changed is the political identity. Human beings, people, citizens, and nationals love to be part of some "clan". That is partly why they like nationalism because it tells them that they are special for just being born in a certain society...?

Globalization or international capitalism is one of the topics of Fukuyama. Of course, any social political movement has always an economic origin. Since the end of WWII, the entire world has economically improved. Many among the ex-colonized nations have become economic competitors. That is why Fukuyama has written that India and China have created huge middle classes, which tend to educate itself too. Manufacturing has left Europe and North America to East Asia and to low labor-cost nations. In several societies, but not only in the Western world, masculine workers saw the incoming of new workers: women, low-skilled workers, and the smart machine. In addition to this, the Western elite does not seem to be preoccupied with the economic realities of their citizens. About this claim, that is what Fukuyama wrote: "..., elite policies produced huge recession, high levels of unemployment, and falling incomes for millions of ordinary workers around the world.

Since the United States and the EU were the leading exemplars, these crises have damaged the reputation of liberal democracy as a whole". Still in the same order of things, we can even say that the rise of Islamic terrorist ideology comes from that same globalization process. In the Muslim countries too, the middle class is looking for ways to earn their life with decency. Muslims are very tired of seeing their own elites living well because they are impeccably serving the Westerners; the simple citizens are asking what is in there for themselves? The quest for dignity is often determined by the way of living. The primary question here is economical. What could be the best social system for us to live in? The Westerners thought that everything in the world belong to them and to confirm that, all the Third World countries were speaking either English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. The world was Eurocentric. Obviously, it is not like that anymore. The Westerners are facing a decline; and this is at the same time economic and political. The economic world is not only the businesses of the Western world.

The workers of the emerging nation-states want to live well too. They are aspiring to great things like their counterpart in the Western world. The colonized like the workers of Europe and North America wants his dignity to be respected. For Fukuyama, this is a fact that even his favorite philosopher has stated in the eighteenth century. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) believed, according to Fukuyama, that the struggle for recognition was the ultimate drive of human history. In other words, for Hegel, the French Revolution was a quest for human dignity. The poor workers wanted his freedom to be embodied in rights and laws. In continuity with this thinking, Fukuyama has a chapter entitled "Revolution of Dignity". Fukuyama reminds us of the Arab Spring as an expression of the resentment and the humiliation of the masses of simple men and women that are afflicted by their own economic and political elite. As a Hegelian, Fukuyama cannot despise Karl Marx (1818-1883); we know he does not! The points that I want to make here is Marx was a Hegelian and he believed like Hegel that History is the history of the masses. This is the main aspect of Modernity: in fact, let us remind ourselves that this period is founded on Renaissance and Enlightenment.

### **Audience**

By reading this work of Fukuyama, we understand that this intellectual is a partisan of Modernity. He clearly appreciates the authors of Renaissance and Enlightenment. And he refers to religious histories and to theologians. No doubt, he is an excellent Western social scientist. What he has noticed is that dignity for your identity can be obtained by two means: religion and nationalism. He is right on this,

religious or the national discourses can be used to help the people to self-identify with one of the two, and to make it afterwards the foundation of their sociopolitical identity. Both are identity vectors that are being used on the political scenery, and both may dynamize the political drive of those who self-identified to one of them. There is an identity that could be both, religious and national: to be a Jew is technically to be a believer, a practitioner of Judaism, but it can also be a cultural and sociopolitical identity. Ernst Bloch (1880-1959) was an atheist but he would always claim his Jewish identity. The end of the Cold War has brought new tensions on the world stage. With the Liberalists and the Communists agenda, everything seemed to be clear. You were part of either one or you could be neutral like India. Since 1990, things have become unclear. Capitalism became the way of the world and with that came the smart machines.

Therefore, modernization process through globalization has affected many traditional agrarian societies. They had to modernize every aspects of their life, which did not come without a social clash... They even had to face a world that was now undefined. As well, it had become a pluralistic world. That multicultural world, with its pluralistic agenda, has not being welcomed since it meant a loss of financial power for several nation-states. In reaction to these realities that people cannot control, our two "fanatics", the ultranationalists and the "religious fundamentalists", are trying to explain why people feel lonely and confused, and at the end, both are offering a "victimization" discourse to those who are listening to them. Their blaming game is the predicament to their ideological quest for "social dignity". Obviously, their quest is very "restrictive" because it is not about all human beings; it is about their particular national or religious group.

Several chapters of the book consist of talking about the Euro-American middle class in the American democracy. Dealing with globalization is one aspect of the analysis but the other aspect is multiculturalism: the Euro-American males is being socially challenges by all the minorities, the majorities of women and by those who are more educated than they are. They understand that the survival fights in their society is far from being easy. Their alliance with the Republican Party and their superb leader Donald Trump is not surprising. Previously we spoke about tribalism; this is what is going on with Euro-America. Their tribal type of nationalism does not consider everyone as being an American, even if you are a citizenship born in the country. Plainly, White America considers itself the real "Americans". What is threatening that mentality is the American historiography and the pluralism of the American society. In effect, USA is a multicultural nation-state. However, for the Euro-American ultranationalists, this is unacceptable. They would like to live in an all "white" society. These folks would like to live in a

homogeneous society, not being homogenized within the pluralism of the current US society.

As well, they want their specific selves to be recognized and celebrated. In the American society, their nationalism is not welcome because it is the foundation of their genocidal policies against the Amerindians, and, the original justifications of slavery and Segregation. What these Euro-Americans are promoting is ethno-nationalism. Fukuyama explained that ideology as a type of identity that may persecute people that are not part of the promoted group and these latter, could commit acts of violence against those who do not belong to them. Ethno-nationalism rests on the concept of race, nationalism, racism and exclusivism. Fukuyama does not reject nationalism; what he rejects is ethno-nationalism because it could be aggressive and intolerant towards different ethnic groups and those who promote a socially liberal ethics.

### Future

Fukuyama thinks that an inclusive nationalism is positive for a nation. Hence, he wrote: firstly, it is good for physical security; secondly, it is important for the maintaining of a good and efficient government on power; thirdly, it could be very useful for the national economic development; fourthly, nationalism is a mean to promote a wide radius of trust. Trust acts like lubricant that facilitates both economic exchange and political participation; fifthly, to protect the national members, the society, against the growth of economic inequalities; and sixthly, nationalism must help the citizens and those about to become citizens to make possible democracy itself. There is no mistake on this since every nation-state that exists has a national discourse.

The weakness of Francis Fukuyama, the Nippon American, is when he defends Huntington who defends hardly the Wasp culture in the USA. The same culture that killed legions of non-Wasps. Samuel Huntington is an ultranationalist political scientist from Harvard University; so, for Fukuyama to defend this right wing intellectual it is because he shares his political weltanschauung. Is Fukuyama a right-winger and an apostle of Waspism? No surprised that he wants to assimilate the newcomers. Dear Dr. Fukuyama, can you be more assimilated than a Black American, whom, four hundred years later, is still suffering from the racism of those who have assimilated him? Fukuyama wrote at page 166 of his book: "We need to promote creedal national identities built around the foundational ideas of modern liberal democracy and, use public policies to deliberately assimilate newcomers to

those identities". Fukuyama, are the Amerindians, the first inhabitants of USA, assimilated enough for you? Why are you writing about assimilation when we know it has not been true to everyone in the USA? What we know is the fact that ethno-nationalism still prevails in the USA! Has he denounced the ultranationalist for their outdated ethno-nationalism? Clearly, Fukuyama promotes assimilationist policies. He repeats himself by writing these words: "strategies for better assimilating immigrants to a country's creedal identity".

We read Samuel Huntington and we could say that he was an ultranationalist. But, Fukuyama sounds like a racist to us. At page 171, he wrote: "Poorly assimilated immigrants are a drag on the state and in some cases constitute dangerous security threats". He is against multilingual and multicultural programs in the high school educational curriculum. He even criticizes New York City on this. Yet, he is not a racist...? Fukuyama he is not a social problem solver. He is even less a politician. The beauty of Fukuyama is that he understands what the problem in the USA and other countries is, when it comes to deal with different ethnic groups. He wrote that, "it has been harder to create broad working-class coalitions to fight for the redistribution because the higher-status identity groups did not want to make common cause with those below them, and vice versa". He finished with vice versa. So, "those below" do not want to be in a good and healthy relationship with those who lead the society? That is where I have a problem with Fukuyama. How can he blame those below those on power? Is he blaming the Amerindians of the USA for their precarious social situation in that nation-state? Inevitably, the chapters on assimilationist views have diminished the value of this book. Francis Fukuyama is a very Eurocentric thinker. May be Fukuyama should be more concerned with post-colonial studies in his political writings.

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