

Critical Multiculturalism and Critical Pedagogy: A Study

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Every civilization evolves over a period of time and develops certain unique characteristics by which it can define and differentiate itself from other civilizations. Indian civilization can also be distinguished from other world civilizations in respect to its continuity, heterogeneity, its syncretic qualities and its accommodating ethos. Indian civilization can be compared to a great river that carries the various cultural strands that join as streams and tributaries at various points of time and give it a distinct composite character.

Ancient India played host to many migrant communities like- the Aryans, the Kushans, the Mongols, the Sakas, the Greeks, the Huns, the Arabs and the Europeans in the recent times.

Archaeological evidence points to the existence of commercial and cultural relations between the borders of north-west India, Iran and central Asia even before the dawn of the Harappan culture.¹ The Harappan civilization had extensive trade and cultural contacts with Mesopotamia, Persia, Afghanistan, and Mediterranean world. The process of acculturation which was set into motion as far back as the third millennium BC continued unabated during the successive period of Indian history and led to the intermingling of a variety of cultural traits and features. The Indian science, mathematics and astronomy were also influenced by the Babylonian arithmetical system and the Greek geometrical system.² Successive waves of Aryan people from central Asia began entering India from the second millennium BC. There is ample evidence in the classical literature about the intermingling of Aryans with indigenous and foreign groups.

Pluralism has been the quintessential feature of Hinduism. From early times, the tribals, the folk cults and ritual practices were incorporated and assimilated into the corpus of Hinduism. Totemic deities such as fish, tortoise and boar were made into incarnations of Vishnu.³ Shiva was formed by the fusion of the Vedic Rudra and some non-Aryan deity, including the Indus deity which has been described as proto-Shiva.⁴ Similarly Narayani and Durga, manifestations of Shiva's consort, were associated with non-Aryan tribes and were later absorbed into Hinduism.⁵ The cult of sun worship was brought to India by the Magas who came to India from the 1st century BC from Sakadvip or Persia.⁶