

ETHNICITY AND ETHNIC IDENTITY: UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL HERITAGE AND BELONGING

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Abstract: Personal identification, social connections, and cultural traditions are all impacted by one's ethnicity and ethnic identity, which are important parts of human society. Having a common language, traditions, customs, and lineage are all aspects that contribute to a group of people's shared cultural legacy, which is referred to as their ethnicity. On the other hand, an individual's sense of belonging to a specific ethnic group is what constitutes their ethnic identity. This sense of belonging is formed by both personal experiences and the effects of society. Because of the rising globalization of the globe, it is vital to have a solid understanding of these concepts in order to cultivate cultural appreciation, social inclusion, and harmony.

Key words: ethnicity, ethnic identity, ethnos, ethnogenecity, cultural diversity, society.

Ethnicity and ethnic identity are essential components of human society, shaping personal identity, social interactions, and cultural traditions. Ethnicity denotes a collective cultural legacy that unites a group through shared language, traditions, practices, and lineage. Ethnic identification refers to an individual's perception of belonging to a specific ethnic group, influenced by personal experiences and societal factors. In a progressively globalized society, comprehending these principles is vital for promoting cultural appreciation, social inclusion, and harmony.

It is a social construct that classifies groups of people based on cultural features rather than physical characteristics. Ethnicity is that social construct. The concept of ethnicity is strongly established in cultural tradition, in contrast to the concept of race, which is frequently classified based on variables such as skin color and genetics. A person of the same ethnicity might have the following:

- a) a language or dialect that is widely spoken
- b) customs, beliefs, and rituals that have been practiced for generations
- c) a historical background or ancestry that is universally shared
- d) various religious rituals that are unique
- e) similarities in the styles of food, music, and art

It is possible to inherit one's ethnicity from one's family, and it is frequently handed down from generation to generation. However, it is also fluid, which means that individuals may identify with numerous ethnic backgrounds or adopt new cultural aspects over the course of their lifetime.

The personal connection that an individual has to their ethnic group is what constitutes their ethnic identity. The degree to which an individual identifies with their cultural heritage, customs, and community is reflected by this sentiment. Factors such as the following contribute to the formation of ethnic identity:

1. The family and the upbringing: parents and other relatives play an important part in the transmission of cultural traditions and the instillation of a sense of belonging in their children.
2. Interactions with the community and other people living in an ethnic community helps to strengthen one's identity by allowing for the sharing of experiences, celebrations, and traditions.
3. The historical and political context: occurrences such as migration, colonization, and discrimination can have an impact on how individuals perceive and express their ethnic identity.
4. Individuals have the ability to choose whether they will accept, modify, or separate themselves from their ethnic identity. This decision is dependent on the individual's own experiences as well as the social influences that they see.

When it comes to identity creation, difficulties such as discrimination or cultural assimilation can often produce conflicts. On the other hand, having a strong ethnic identity can bring a sense of pride, belonging, and emotional support.

Human civilization is characterized by its richness and diversity, both of which are contributed to by ethnicity and ethnic identity. They exert a significant influence on the manner in which societal institutions, traditions, and interpersonal interactions are organized. Some of the most important advantages of comprehending and accepting one's ethnic identity are as follows:

- a) the preservation of cultural diversity and heritage: ethnic groups are responsible for the preservation of significant cultural traditions, languages, and historical narratives that contribute to the enrichment of world heritage.
- b) social cohesion and community building: strong ethnic identities help communities feel more united and like they belong, which in turn strengthens the relationships that bind them together.
- c) personal empowerment and self-understanding: recognizing one's ethnic identity enables individuals to develop self-confidence, self-respect, and a more profound connection to their heritage.

In order to battle stereotypes, reduce prejudice, and promote equal opportunities for all cultural groups, it is helpful to have an awareness of ethnic diversity through the process of resolving discrimination and encouraging inclusion. This understanding serves the objective of promoting equal opportunities for all cultural groups.

Although one's ethnicity can be a source of pride and identity, it also has the potential to cause difficulties. Within the course of human history, societal divides have been brought about by issues such as racism, xenophobia, and ethnic prejudice. Globalization and marriages between people of different ethnicities are also contributing to the development of identities that are more fluid and hybrid, which challenges conventional ideas of ethnicity.

A growing number of contemporary countries are beginning to acknowledge the significance of multiculturalism, which is a concept in which individuals are able to embrace different ethnic identities without experiencing a sense of being bound to a particular cultural identification. This shifting viewpoint promotes greater inclusiveness, respect, and admiration for people who come from a variety of historical and cultural backgrounds.

Conclusion

The way in which individuals connect with their heritage, communities, and the wider world is shaped by their ethnicity and ethnic identity, which are fundamental components of the human experience. It is possible for cultures to foster cultural appreciation, social harmony, and mutual respect of one another if they comprehend and accept the existence of ethnic variety. In spite of the fact that the world is always changing, it is still necessary to acknowledge and value ethnic identity in order to construct communities that are more welcoming and cohesive.

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