

Unity in Diversity is our Strength!

Part -One

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Diversity (pluralism) is a concept (policy) in which more than two ethnic communities who claim their own distinctive identity live composed under a single administration or nation. Language, tradition, common history and social cohesion can be taken as dimensions of a certain ethnic identity. It can't and shouldn't be denied the fact that there are societies that consider themselves as unique (different) in different countries.

In the FDRE constitution, 'nation, nationalities and people' is defined as a group of people who have or share large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory.

Different countries and governments use their own respective (different) policies on how they build a nation and on how they accommodate diversity. On one side, believing that diversity is a hindrance to nation-building, end-up putting up policies that destroys diversity. On the other hand, diversity is used as a catalyst to nation – building treating it as an opportunity.

There are also ways within these two extremes. By adhering to a policy that gives minority ethnic communities language and tradition rights,

many countries opens schools that educates these minorities with their own languages and service giving government institutions that also communicate their language.

It also includes having a radio television programs that's aired through their language, providing an access to their own language during trial and giving their language recognition on some regional administration where some minorities exists.

The other way of running a diverse nation is, comprising representatives of different backgrounds into central government's institution. This type of procedure is based on an agreement that put the elites of every ethnic into the central government. It's expected or believed that they will negotiate on power sharing, education and other opportunities to guarantee (protect) the interest of the society of their representation.

The other type of system of adminstartion has to do with denying ethnic identities or destroying marking of different ethnic identities. This system believes that a given nation is successfully built by basing it on one identity and one ethnic.

This was the policy widely used by Western Europe nations during the 18th and 20th century. This system a procedure in most cultural communities are forced and pressurized to subordinate, follow and assimilate to the previlaged ethnic's identity and identity. Nowadays this procedure still is being put to use by western nations on immigrants.

The other system of adminstration is known as pooling. It's a system (way) in which different ethnic communities get to get involved on social, economic and political issues without losing their identity (culture). This

system creates pooling of different ethnic communities using different policy instruments.

The other way of handling multiethnic nation has to do with power devolution unto the lower administrative echelons. This type of policy is done when a given ethnic group is concentrated on a given land that they call their own.

The central government gives them an autonomous (wide) power and freedom to administer their own land. However, since the power is not vested in the constitution, the central government has a lawful right to take any of the freedom it gave to these ethnic communities.

One of the reasons that force governments to use federal system of administration has to do with the difficulty that's associated with accommodating diverse cultural (ethnic) identities. It's believed that federal system is much better equipped to manage diversity than those other designs mentioned above.

As the system combines both self-rule and shared-rule, it gives constitutional guarantee to all the cultural (ethnic) communities in a multiethnic country. Also, this type of system empowers them by giving them just representation in the federal government. However, as many federations don't follow the same framework (structure), those federal systems that are not structured on ethno-linguistic line are forced to take additional measures on language and other related policies.

Ethiopia during its pre-federal system era, used to be a prison to its nation, nationalities and people.

During the imperial era, the belief of ‘one language, one religion, history, custom, administration (centrist), flag have led for the nation, nationalities and people of Ethiopia to lose their cultural identity and forced them to follow a specific philosophy to be considered an Ethiopian.

It was a system which had forced nation, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia to lose their ethnic (cultural) identity along with their lands, to change the names of people and areas, to be ashamed of their lineage and to be apathied because of their religion.

And During the ‘Derg’ regime there wasn’t any substantial change on the policy. Continuing with the imperial era policy of ‘denying ethnic (cultural) identity’, it has butchered those who raised ethnic and identity related demands.

Although the ‘Derg’ regime has changed the previous ‘balabat’ land policy, it did what it did not taking into account the demands raised in association to identity (ethnicity). Also the ‘Derg’ proclamation of right to self – administration issued in its dying bed was done with plans to cool the demand of ethnic (cultural) identity that was raging all over the country.

It wasn’t done to give a substantial answer to the ethnic and identity issue. Not only this, it was done without basing it on the wishes of the people who demanded a change, and without giving a constitutional guarantee. Since this proclamation of self-administration was to be done by merging one ethnic line with another, it’s obvious that it was aimed to destroy identity (not solve it).

When, we come to the current Ethiopia federal system, the right it gives to various ethnic identities of the country compared to many federations is not only profound, but it also can be a lesson for countries are aspiring to pursue multiethnic federalism. The system's accommodation of diverse ethnics emanates from a core belief of 'diversity is an opportunity'. And this spirit can be found stipulated on different articles of the FDRE constitution.

The preamble of the constitution states that the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia have entered a covenant to live together accepting and respecting their differences, and further promote their shared interests to create one economic community necessary for the collective promotion of their interests. They've agreed that their diversity is an opportunity for their unity and shared interest.

The FDRE constitution stipulates that the emblem of the flag (shall) reflect the equality of Nations, Nationalities, Peoples as well as religious communities of Ethiopia and also their hope to live together. All languages of Ethiopia's nation, nationalities and people enjoy equal recognition, and Members of the Federation may by law determine their respective working languages.

The fact that all sovereign power resides in the nation, nationalities and people of Ethiopia and it shall be expressed through their representatives elected is clearly stipulated in the constitution. Also the constitution by separating state and religion, it has put its weight on the government to treat every region equally; in addition to guaranteeing the right to choose any religion.

Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination upto right to secession. And it have also the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture; and to preserve its history; including the right to self-adminstration, as stipulated in the constitution,.

In addition it has been stipulated that every ethnic community have the right to self-administeration, while it has been also specified that women have equal equal with their male counterpart be in political, social and economic sphere along with the fact that they are entitled to affirmative measure in order to remedy the historical legacy of inequality and discrimination suffered by women in Ethiopia.

The federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's constitution stipulates that land is the common property of nation, nationalities and people of Ethiopia.

The constitution also specifies that all these ethnic communities have the right to give suggestion on government policies and strategies that concerns with the society they are member of. Also the fact that it's stipulated on the constitution that each Nation, Nationality and People shall be represented in the House of the Federation by at least one member, minorities should have twenty chairs assigned to them on the House of Peoples' Representatives without any voting process, have enabled them to have their say.

The other thing that's unique to Ethiopia's federal system is the fact it guarantees a second federal house that's chaired by all nation, nationalities and peoples' representative.

The FDRE constitution with relation to religion lay down that freedom to express or manifest one's religion or belief may be subject only to such limitations necessary to protect public safety, peace, health, education, public morality or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, and to ensure the independence of the state from religion. Also education should be free from the influences of religion, political persuasions and customary influences.

Although religions cannot be a danger to peace, health, education or other democratic rights, the reason why these ruling are important is because we are seeing some activities that hamper freedom of religion under the guise of religion. In Addition to this, any activity that hampers religion freedom and equality also directly contradicts other democratic rights. These anti-democratic activities also contradict the supreme thinking that believes human rights shouldn't be curtailed.

There are some underlined issues that we would understand from these limitation (as prescribed by the law). The first is the fact that the government structure is based on ethnic identity. And every identity has the right to establish its own self-administration every lingo-ethnic community has been given recognition that would suit their identity.

The other peculiar feature of Ethiopia's federalism is the fact that it's based on ethno-linguistic line and that it constitutionally empowers ethnic – based rights.

Some federation as a result of the absence of these issues from the constitution they are forced to use legal and even police force to subdue ethnic-based demands. The fact that the Ethiopian federal system remedied this paucity from the start has put it in a unique position compared to other federations.

In order to guarantee lack of representation of minority ethnics in House of people's representative, the constitution has provided a way in which they'll be represented on special condition. This shows that in order for minority ethnic community don't get stifled by the majority it's a right given minority to enable them reflect their wishes.

In other part, women equality with men have now got constitutional guarantee, stopping gender bias they used to suffer in relation to the backward mentality and the incorrect policies of the previous regimes adhered with regards to the issue.