AN APPLICATION OF BERLIN'S CONCEPT OF VALUE PLURALISM TO THE INDIAN CONTEXT

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN PHILOSOPHY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF HUMAN SCIENCES ASSUMPTION UNIVERSITY OF THAILAND
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ABSTRACT

The research focuses on Isiah Berlin’s (1909–97) concept of value pluralism and its role in a democratic society. It is especially concerned with how value pluralism can be used to understand the situation in India. In any society, there are a number of diverse values, and an individual is often required to choose between them. It is part of the human predicament that one has to make many such choices and secondly one has to also recognize the criteria by which one is making a choice. As a pluralist, Berlin is aware that all fundamental values have their own worth in themselves and that they tend to be incommensurable with one another. In the context contemporary global politics, the protection of pluralism in India is of considerable importance. Indian society’s pluralist nature can be traced back to the ancient period of Indian civilization and its religious practices. *Dharma* is the central notion of Indian religious practices. Yet this pluralist tradition is not appreciated and has come under threat. Given this situation, it is necessary to delve into the causes of pluralism, which have their basis in philosophy, history, human nature, and political value systems. Berlin’s philosophy of value pluralism demonstrates how a respect for pluralism can be maintained in the face of state sovereignty and democracy. His insights anchor an analysis of the traditional pluralistic values in Indian society. They suggest a way for India to balance its older pluralistic tradition with more modern political structures, while allowing it to develop its own approach to democracy which would preserve its traditional values in the face of globalization. His notion of value pluralism and freedom are vital in restoring traditional values in order to resist the more destructive forces of nationalism.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Significance of Research

Indian society is known for its pluralist nature, and its Constitution seeks to promote the ideal of a peaceful co-existence among a diversity of cultures, languages, social practices, traditions and religions. This pluralist nature can be traced back to the ancient period of Indian civilization, which flourished and benefited in moral and material ways from this pluralist nature. This can be seen in its varied intellectual, religious and cultural traditions. Historically, Indian civilization has accommodated various cultures and continues to this day to be heterogeneous in nature. The nation has been a host to several streams of migration from different parts of the world, dating back to the middle of the second millennium BCE. These migrant groups both brought their own customs and went through a process of indigenization (Momin, 1996, p.99). These people are known as Indo-Aryans and the Vedas have a detailed description of their culture and literature. The Vedas are considered the sacred texts of Hinduism. The word Veda means ‘to know’ or ‘to seek’ supreme knowledge. The Vedas are a collection of eternal Truths—sacred knowledge—which were first perceived and heard by great sages and transmitted orally over thousands of years, then composed into scripture-form at a later date. This composition is divided into four main parts: Rg, Yajur, Sama, and Atharva, which are further divided into various portions: Samhitas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads. Samhitas presents sacred hymns addressing various gods and goddesses for different rituals. Brahmanas provides detailed descriptions of sacrificial rites. Aranyakas explains the meanings of the rituals. Upanishads contains abstract and philosophic implications of the meanings. The origin of the Vedas can be traced back thousands of years; the Rg Vedic Samhitas is the oldest of all. Hence the culture of Rg Vedic Samhitas is said to be of early Vedic Age, and the others of the later Vedic Age. Vedic society was internally
differentiated and pluralistic, rather than monolithic and homogeneous. It was an amalgam or synthesis of Aryan and non-Aryan (including tribal) elements. Momin states that “since ancient times Indian civilization has had a pluralistic and composite character, the pluralistic and composite ethos of Indian civilization, which began germinating during the Vedic period, was supplemented by the rise of Buddhism and Jainism...” (1996, p. 101).

In the sixth century BCE, this pluralistic nature became more evident because the evolving of Buddhism and Jainism challenged the credibility of the Vedas. Then Christianity made its way to Kerala, India, in the fourth century CE. Parsee Zoroastrianism found a home in India by the late seventh century CE. Judaism arrived in India around the eighth century CE after the fall of Jerusalem to the Muslims. In the eighth century, Islam also reached India through trade and invasions (Sen, 2005, p. 17). Each of these religions led the cultural and social aspects of India, even Hinduism, to an even greater pluralistic ethos. The interaction and exchange between Hindus and Muslims also brought new religious practices such as the Sufi and Bhakti movements. These movements were an expression of syncretistic tradition. The Sufi movement is known for its extremely tolerant viewpoint which has attracted many Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs to its association. The Bhakti movement, similar to Sufism, provided another pluralistic way of seeking ultimate truth during the medieval period. All in all, India exhibits an extensive variety and heterogeneity of cultures, preserved over time.

India is home to many ethnic groups with diverse lifestyles and social practices. As Kothari stated:

In contrast to the great historical empires, the unity of India owed itself, not to the authority of a given political system but to a wide diffusion of the cultural symbols, the spiritual values and the structure of functions characteristic of a continuous civilization. The essential identity of India has not been political but cultural. (1998, pp. 77-78)

The essential identity of India deeply involves this diversity of cultural characteristics. Various cultures, religions, and languages have co-existed and survived here for many years.
India has long been a place of pluralism and tolerance, open to many traditions and religions for centuries. The pluralistic nature of India continues to survive, struggling, because it is deeply rooted in every aspect of religion, social custom and cultural practice of the Indian people. Guha states that:

In India, ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity are part of the background noise. They are taken for granted. That people might speak their own languages and even insist on being educated in them, that people wear different kinds of clothes, eat different kinds of food, worship different gods, is not something Indians have to learn to see, stress, or accept. This is because there is no single national essence. (2013)

Having “no single national essence” may indicate that a deeper sort of pluralism exists in the nation, even though some fundamentalists now use this issue of plurality to play a politics of division, fear and intolerance among the people. Their politics aims to eliminate the pluralistic nature of the nation and establish a single religion, language, and a particular version of customs and practices.

India, as the world’s largest democracy, is known for its peace and mutual respect for all, but in recent years, it has been struggling to keep its ancient heritage of plurality. Recent years have seen a number of anti-social events seeking to abolish the pluralist way of living in order to pursue some singular national interest. Even though India has had a pluralist nature from its early civilization, the very notion of pluralism is now in jeopardy due to some well-organized fundamentalist groups’ efforts to eradicate the freedom of minorities in the name of nationalism. Some socio-religious fundamentalist groups use violence, feudalism and caste-ism as means to demonize the poor, the downtrodden, the oppressed classes and the minorities in society. Besides these means, modern religious fundamentalist politicians are trying to change historical facts in school textbooks in order to contaminate the minds and hearts of the new generation.

Textbooks are tools to understand the real facts about the history of a nation, including the diversity and plurality which has existed in this nation for ages. Presenting
history textbooks with deliberate errors can inculcate incorrect views about the country. Students must be encouraged to think critically about the real facts of their history; to present something intentionally incorrect can poison education as a whole. Thapar states “Reducing history to the lowest and most doubtful common denominator means that this is not only an attempt to wreck the discipline, but has wider social implications” (2004). Any government that gets involved in distorting the history in textbooks can cause great harm to the peace and tranquility of future generations. These changes in history textbooks are intended to establish a religious nationalism by majority religious groups who have narrow visions about the future of the nation. This religious nationalism is the product of the colonial era and is based upon a monistic idea. The colonial rulers who occupied the Indian subcontinent once argued that their reason for occupation was to keep peace between Hindus and Muslims. Some religious fundamentalist politicians tend to interpret this history according to a two-nation theory (Thapar, 2004) that is, one nation based upon Islamic rules and the other upon Hindu rules. These views, challenged by scholars, do not represent the true history of the nation.

It is important for any government to acknowledge the freedom of universities and other educational institutions because these are places where young minds learn to think critically for a healthier future nation. Any change in the textbooks or the educational institution itself should be left to the freedom of academicians. The government should not politicize the educational curriculum as a personal political vendetta. India’s Constitution declares the secular democratic nature of the nation. The ruling government is expected to follow democratic procedures in directing the country toward a better future, but some religious nationalist leaders fail to acknowledge the sovereignty of an Indian identity based upon secular democratic and pluralistic elements. These people have become a threat to the secular democratic foundation of the nation.
A democratic state should celebrate its freedom of speech. However, some socio-religious fundamentalist groups feel threatened by individuals who raise questions about their existence and their continual abuse of democratic values. These groups use the power of the government to bring charges of sedition against individuals who oppose their views on religious nationalism. The sedition law, which falls under section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code, a British colonial-era law passed in the nineteenth century, has been invoked numerous times against freedom fighters like Mahatma Gandhi and many others, but today it is used against individuals who fight against the government for not being democratic in carrying out its functions. Thapar states:

Democracy is now threatened by religious majoritarianism, claiming that the basic definition of Indian society derives from religious communities, therefore, the wishes of the religious community that forms the majority, should prevail. This is a denial of the equal status of other religious groups. The secularizing of Indian society as a necessary part of modernization is described as alien to Indian civilization and therefore to be discarded. If secularism is alien so too are its essentials, namely, the ensuring of human rights and the equality of all citizens. (2004)

The declaration of rights in the Indian Constitution intends to safeguard individual liberties by defining the extent of the government’s authority so that it does not encroach upon personal freedoms. India’s Constitution stands for pluralism, mutual respect and the protection of basic rights for all, but these values are not seriously implemented and easily abused by the powerful. One might wonder why these commendable values are not implemented when they are guaranteed by the Constitution. Is there a way to implement these values so that they apply to the real lives of the people?

Obviously it is not easy to come up with an answer for these issues. Ancient India had a long tradition of pluralism. This is evidenced at the very deepest level, reflected in ideas of dharma. Western political ideas have been introduced to India through colonialism and through its emergence after colonialism as a nation state. Many political ideas concerning sovereignty and democracy are hostile to the idea of pluralism. Isaiah Berlin’s (1909–97)
philosophy of value pluralism demonstrates how a respect for pluralism can be maintained in the face of sovereignty and democracy. It allows India to balance its older pluralistic tradition with the more modern Western political framework. It allows it to develop its own approach to democracy in the face of globalization, and to resist the more destructive forces of nationalism.

There have been many Indian thinkers and social crusaders who have offered some insights through their speeches and writings on how to overcome social inequities, but they usually exhibit some prejudice in those insights due to cultural, social and religious impulses. So it is important to have someone outside of these social and religious backgrounds whose thoughts and insights might offer better help. The researcher finds that Berlin’s understanding of value pluralism has that unbiased direction and assistance needed to overcome some of the political and religious biases. His philosophy is humane and does not stand for or against any particular cultural values or religious values. Berlin was born in Russia, but later his family moved to Britain due to the political unrest in Russia during his early childhood. He is known for essays on political theory, history, and education. His philosophical search for answers has been related to human values, justice, freedom and morality that have been immensely influenced by the brutal political upheavals of nineteenth century Europe. His philosophical roots rest upon the study of these historical events and their impact on human lives. He has argued against the notions of historical determination, political extremism and moral monism1 and has defended the notion of liberalism2 and the existence of pluralism in human nature3. His essay “Two Concepts of Liberty” (1958) has had immense influence in the field

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1 According to moral monism, there is one central answer to every human issue such as how one should live, how one should rule and be ruled and how everything is related to one universal idea.
2 Berlin is famous for the distinction between positive and negative liberty. For him, liberalism upholds individual liberty, tolerance and personal autonomy, and it makes the conditions possible for individuals to follow a wide range of purposes.
3 Berlin associates his understanding of human nature with pluralism and freedom.
of political theory. In this essay, he introduced the idea that conflict can exist even within a value, unpacking the notion of value pluralism.

Berlin’s views on value pluralism are applicable to India and any society which struggles with issues of pluralism, because his argument regarding value pluralism offers a unique solution to understanding such issues. Ultimately understanding an issue helps to overcome a problem by finding a solution. His views, while based upon reason, are also very humane and provide ways to overcome the politics of division, of fear and of intolerance. Even though he is a twentieth century philosopher addressing the problems of his time, his ideas about value pluralism are still relevant because of their deep understanding of human pluralistic nature in relation to contemporary social and political situations. For him, issues relating to social justice, human rights and liberty are of singular importance. He holds that individual liberty assumes prominence and that political ideals first need to address the principle of individual freedom. A further aim of his philosophy is peaceful co-existence between diverse values. This aim includes individualism and pluralism and is not tied to any one particular doctrine of one’s role or destiny. Political ideals should serve these principles.

Barker observed:

Civil liberty consists of three differently expressed articles — physical freedom from injury or threat to life; intellectual freedom for the expression of thought and belief; and practical freedom for the play of will and the exercise of choice in the general field of contractual action and relation to other persons. (1961, pp. 146-147)

Berlin’s notion of liberty unpacks the deeper significance of freedom which recognizes that every individual person is unique, and should have the freedom to do what he/she wishes to do in the world. He repeatedly argues that human beings are free, rich and diverse beings. In upholding two significant aspects of liberty, however, he acknowledges the diversity of values among individuals. In order to highlight the conflict between individual liberty and the restrictions brought about by state laws and sanctions, Berlin arrives at the
distinction between negative liberty⁴ and positive liberty⁵ thereby exposing the problematic issues of power-based politics, coercion, and the limits of government interference. His analysis seeks to set out an ideal of value pluralism, showing the freedom provided by diverse options while remaining cognizant of the negative liberty as well. The threat posed by positive liberty is exemplified in Berlin’s critical account of authoritarian regimes with oppressive policies. He notes the need for suitable options to express one’s values, while acknowledging that contemporary pluralistic societies need negative liberty to measure the extent to which positive liberty helps resolve conflicts among competing value systems. In the Indian context, positive liberty is necessary to balance negative liberty and so this thesis will investigate the balance and limits of negative liberty. Berlin’s value pluralism sheds light on the problems of a pluralistic society, especially the multicultural Indian society.

1.2 Thesis Statement

Western political ideas have been introduced to India through colonialism and through its emergence after colonialism as a nation state. Many political ideas concerning sovereignty and democracy are hostile to the idea of pluralism. Isaiah Berlin’s (1909–97) philosophy of value pluralism demonstrates how a respect for pluralism can be maintained in the face of sovereignty and democracy. It allows India to balance its older pluralistic tradition with the more modern Western political framework. It allows it to develop its own approach to democracy in the face of globalization, and to resist the more destructive forces of nationalism.

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⁴ Negative liberty means the possibility to choose with an absence of external obstacles. This concept will be explored in the third chapter along with that of positive liberty.

⁵ Positive liberty refers to the possibility to choose in such a way that it leads to realizing one’s fundamental potential.
1.3 Questions which are related to the topic

1.3.1 What is value pluralism as understood by Berlin?

1.3.2 How is value pluralism connected to philosophy, political theory, history and human nature?

1.3.3 How can Berlin's philosophy be applied to Indian multiculturalism?

1.3.4 How can the adoption of value pluralism as a theory help overcome conflicts in Indian social context?

1.3.5 What are the context-specific criteria for the resolution of conflicts?

1.4 Objectives of the Dissertation

1.4.1 To set out the importance of pluralism in a world of diversity in traditions, values, religions and cultures.

1.4.2 To discuss the theory of Berlin with reference to the causes of pluralism and showcase its base in philosophy, history, human nature and political value systems.

1.4.3 To understand the relationship of value pluralism to liberalism in a political context.

1.4.4 To specify the importance of pluralism and secularism in India and its anchor in the ethical background of dharma.

1.4.5 To use Berlin’s value pluralism to understand how the pluralistic Indian tradition can be reconciled with modern political theories of democracy and the nation state.


1.5 Preceding Relevant Researches

The topic of value pluralism of Berlin and the notions of liberty in the theory of Isaiah Berlin has been developed by Connie Aasbergen-Ligvoet in the work entitled ‘Isaiah Berlin’. It refers to value pluralism and a humanistic view of human nature and meaning of life. In the process of explicating in this area of Berlinian theory, the essence of value pluralism, value conflict and the ways to resolve these issues are dealt with, the focus being on Berlin’s ideas to encourage diversity of interests in a multicultural context and the need for empathetic understanding if one has to support pluralism. Reference has been made to Berlin’s notion of a “common human nature” and shows human persons as endowed with a basic morality. All these concepts are relevant to the topic of research providing resource material on Berlin’s thought. The work of Ferrell, Crowder and Galston endeavor to link pluralism to liberalism providing research material for proving the same within Berlin’s thought. Their arguments have been earmarked for further analysis and consideration and form part of a chapter in the thesis. The thesis itself goes beyond mere discussions of the pros and cons of Berlin’s value pluralism by concretely utilizing these details to its further application in a multicultural society such India. It is made quite clear in the analysis that Berlin’s thought seeks a balance between the extremes of monistic universalism and relativism in order to stabilize the grounds of value pluralism.

Rajiv Malhotra in his work “Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism” has contributed to the understanding of Indian culture and philosophy with reference to the Vedic background, by explicating on the concept of dharma and its various connotations. He touches upon the features of Indian democracy working towards maintaining multiculturalism of Indian society by constitutional safeguards.
1.6 Definitions of the Terms Used

1.6.1 Ahimsa: is the moral principle of non-violence in thought, word or deed; a policy of tolerance and positive good will to all beings.

1.6.2 Democracy: in this instance constitutes a representative government elected by the people to protect their liberties, rights and aims of life as enshrined in the constitution.

1.6.3 Dharma: In the Indian context the concept of dharma encompasses a range of meanings such as law and custom, social obligation, rules of conduct, principle of righteousness, duties, responsibilities and statutes.

1.6.4 Incommensurability: is a term that signifies that not all goods or values can be combined harmoniously together leading to conflicts between values having equal validity.

1.6.5 Karma: means deeds that an individual performs. The deeds one did in one’s previous lifetime determine one’s present life.

1.6.6 Liberalism: refers to the basic freedom given to individuals to follow their goals made possible by governmental policies by limiting state interference on fundamental rights.

1.6.7 Moral monism: there is one central answer to every human issue such as how one should live, how one should rule and be ruled and how everything is related to one universal idea.

1.6.8 Multiculturalism: signifies the variety of cultural forms indicated by custom, social practices, norms, religious symbolism and goals of humanity.

1.6.9 Negative liberty: would mean the possibility to choose with an absence of external obstacles.
1.6.10 Positive liberty: would refer to the possibility to choose in such a way that it leads to realizing one’s fundamental potential.

1.6.11 Value Pluralism: refers to a diversity of goods, moral principles, traditions, ideals, cultures and ways of life adopted by mankind, all of which have equal standing as one value among others.

1.7 Limitations of the Research

The area of the research topic is centered on Berlin's political theory, the concept of negative and positive liberty and value pluralism.

Incommensurability of values and existence of conflicts is explored. Pluralism of Indian society is set out and Berlin's views as applicable to multiculturalism with specific reference to the Indian context are discussed. It is shown that pluralism as a theory implies liberalism as its political base.

The views of Amartya Sen, Carl Schmitt and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan are interesting contributions to political issues, but lie beyond the scope of the research and will not be covered. Amartya Sen’s analysis of “Rationality and Freedom” are worth noting. According to Sen, one cannot act solely on one’s own decision. A third party has to decide what is good/bad for oneself. If the agent is given complete freedom, it is possible to act irrationally. Sen advocates welfare economics as the solution to problems in Indian society. Sen supports intervention by Government by positing an inverse relationship between freedom and rationality. The political thinker Schmitt's explication on the role of state is such that a nation needs to protect itself against external threat by military force. He makes a friend/enemy distinction towards this end. The Indian statesman Radhakrishnan looked upon tolerance and ahimsa (non-violence) as providing a sound basis for pluralism in a democratic political system such as India. Inclusion of the views of these thinkers would make the
research topic too broad, hence the research is restricted to analysis of Berlin's political thought and its bearing on Indian pluralism.

While a brief reference to contemporary subaltern studies in the Indian context and its implications is made, the study cannot focus on related issues. Subaltern studies is too vast as its area includes the fields of history, anthropology, sociology, cultural imperialism as well providing an appraisal of subaltern women and female subjectivity in the post-colonial India.

1.8 Methodology

a) This research is a qualitative study of text analysis based on the critical analysis of documents from primary and secondary texts which deals with Isaiah Berlin’s political thought. The research will undergo an extensive use of books and online materials from the AU library and other universities' libraries accessible to the researcher.

b) The research procedure will be based on explication of key concepts and theories of Berlin from a political and philosophical perspective. It will employ critical analysis of these ideas and practically utilize the results in the context of its application to Indian multiculturalism and its survival.

1.9 Outline

Chapter one contains the plan of the dissertation, especially what the researcher propose to do, the thesis statement and objectives.

Chapter two examines the meaning and issues of Berlin’s value pluralism. This chapter deals with the importance of value pluralism and how Berlin developed this notion from his study of the Enlightenment thinkers Giambattista Vico and Johann Gottfried Herder. Along with these thinkers, J.S. Mill also had some influence on Berlin’s understanding of pluralism and liberty. The chapter argues that pluralism offers more choices for individual
persons in a society, and it concludes with the reasons for pursuing Berlin’s philosophy for the India’s contemporary political situation.

Chapter three describes Berlin’s concept of liberty and its basis in value pluralism. To understand further his concept of liberty requires studying his distinction between positive and negative liberty and the issues involved in these concepts. The chapter ends with the successes and limitations of value pluralism and the importance of having a proper political judgment to guard the existence of both plurality and liberty in a society.

Chapter four explores ancient India’s long tradition of pluralism as reflected in the ideas of dharma. The nation has emerged as a democratic nation after colonialism. So many political ideas concerning sovereignty and democracy are unsympathetic to traditional pluralism. These anti-pluralistic developments contradict Berlin’s value pluralism because such movements can diminish human values and freedom. The historical analysis of pluralism in India helps to appreciate the notion of Berlin’s value pluralism, but may also be studied and applied to preserve the future of plurality in India.

Chapter five is the application and understanding of Berlin’s value pluralism to India’s context. The chapter concludes with some recommendations.
CHAPTER 2
BERLIN’S PLURALISM

The word ‘pluralism’ has wide meanings in human lives. It can refer to multiple daily practices, different views of reality, a social organization with varied religious practices, or even ethnic groups. Berlin justifies pluralism because he finds moral monism leads to political authoritarianism. So he deviates from the moral monist beliefs of traditional Western thought. Moral monism holds that all the ethical clarifications have a single correct answer and “that all these answers dovetail within a single, coherent moral system” (Crowder, 2006, p. 5). Many Western philosophers have argued that there is a single harmonious truth which is the ultimate end for human beings. Such a notion can be traced back to the Greeks who accepted philosophia perennis as the dominant thought for many centuries. According to this thought, philosophical truths are assumed to exist independently, unaffected by time or place, and the truth is always one. The truth cannot be many; many is considered an error.

Berlin rejects moral monism because of the influence of the counter-enlightenment thinkers, especially Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) and Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) (Berlin, 2002, p. 95). For ages, human beings have desired to live in a perfect harmonious society. Such desires originated from many monist theories that are based upon a single way of life. Berlin argues that such desires for the perfect and harmonious have given birth to political authoritarianism and totalitarianism which have caused many miseries to people in different parts of the world. Based upon the universal wish for a perfect society, many thinkers have urged individuals to surrender their freedom for the sake of the common good which means, for Berlin, to give away the essence of being human. Moral monists’ views undermine the pluralistic dimension of humans’ moral and political life-choices.
Berlin believes:

The ends of men are many, and not all of them are in principle compatible with each other, then the possibility of conflict - and of tragedy - can never wholly be eliminated from human life, either personal or social. (2002, p. 214)

For Berlin, an individual is forced to choose between multiple moral claims, and one cannot avoid this predicament because of the pluralistic nature of values in the human condition. Individuals have “many possible courses of action and forms of life worth living, and therefore to choose between them is part of being rational or capable of moral judgment; they cannot avoid choice for one central reason” (Berlin, 2002, p. 43) because eventually individuals have to choose. A person needs a certain amount of freedom so that one can make a right decision. That is why Berlin emphasizes the connection between freedom and pluralism. Berlin argues that there has to be a minimum amount of freedom for any decent human life. Berlin’s general concept of pluralism has deep implications for political pluralism. His understanding of pluralism is called ‘value pluralism’ and it is associated with political liberalism.

In upholding a pluralist stand, Berlin clearly repudiates a monistic political theory. The notion of a harmonious and perfect society he considers impractical. The ideal of a utopia cannot be realized, as he states, “The assumption on which this is based is that men have a certain fixed, unaltering nature, certain universal, common, immutable common goals. Once these goals are realized, human nature is wholly fulfilled” (1997, p. 20). The fact remains that the ends which humans seek are not identical. There is a diversity of communities, cultures, traditions and customs present in a society because the aims of life differ. Each has their own individuality, part of their uniqueness, and people recognize these differences among cultures. Each has its own value and one cannot be discarded in favor of another.
2.1 Value Pluralism and Disagreement

Berlin’s main focus has been on value pluralism and liberalism. Through his essay “Two Concepts of Liberty” (1958), he has brought a new dimension to the understanding of pluralism and liberty. As a historian, he notes how human socio-political issues are deeply intertwined with the ideas of value pluralism and freedom. The idea of value pluralism, introduced by Berlin, simply means that many values inevitably conflict. His singular importance lies in defining their connection to the freedom of the individual. He upholds two concepts of liberty, and favors value pluralism. His understanding of pluralism is very unique in comparison to that of his predecessors. Value pluralism refers to a diversity of goods, traditions, value systems, ideals, cultures and ways of life. As Berlin’s account of value pluralism acknowledges a diversity of values, he elaborates on the means to safeguard a diversity of cultures. In this context, the notion of positive and negative liberty assumes prominence. The responsibility of the political nexus and its legal sanctions must cater to pluralism.

Hampshire states two important features of value pluralism: “first, the idea that certain of our values are incompatible or uncombiable with one another, and second, the idea that some of these may also turn out to be incommensurable or incomparable with one another” (cited in Spicer, 2010, p. 19). This asserts that a single system or human method cannot possibly explain all human values. Conflicts and incommensurability are the unavoidable outcome of any attempt to reconcile various values in a single method.

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus (500 BC) was one of the early thinkers to recognize the conflict in human life (Spicer, 2010, p. 18). He affirms that “all things are in a state of flux, of change” which means all changing things have built-in conflicts and tensions. So conflict can coexist within a good. For him, strife is an essential element of reality. For that reason, he claims that Homer was wrong when he said, “Would that strife might perish from
among gods and men!” (Homer, *Iliad*, 18.107) Unwittingly, Homer was praying for the destruction of the universe. For Heraclitus, the motion of the universe requires strife and tension just as the operation of lyre and a bow requires some tension. He recognizes the fact that one cannot survive in the world without conflict because one has to make constant rational choices with which others may disagree. Berlin elaborated this notion of conflict in human life with even greater clarity.

Berlin believes that there cannot be a single unitary view of the human end. Instead, he holds that there are an indeterminate number of human values which are often incommensurable and irreconcilable (Adams & Dyson, 2007, p. 191). For this reason, “[t]he necessity of choosing between absolute claims is then an inescapable characteristic of the human condition” (Berlin, 2002, p. 214). Most often an individual is faced with a plurality of incommensurable values. Often, choosing between the values can be difficult but a person cannot escape this incommensurability. In his interview with Jahanbegloo, Berlin states that:

> Some of the ultimate values by which men live cannot be reconciled or combined, not just for practical reasons, but in principle, conceptually. Nobody can be both a careful planner, and, at the same time, wholly spontaneous. You cannot combine full liberty with full equality; full liberty for the wolves cannot be combined with full liberty for the sheep. Justice and mercy, knowledge and happiness can collide. (cited in Spicer, 2010, p. 19)

It would be difficult to determine, much less rank values like liberty, equality, justice and mercy, but ultimately one has to sacrifice some value for the sake another value. In such a situation one tends to use practical reasoning based upon the immediate context rather than upon a scientific procedure or a principle. Berlin adapts the romantic view of Kant that human values do not exist independently somewhere in the universe, but they are creations of human beings (Cherniss & Hardy, 2004). This view led Berlin to formulate his theory of liberty based upon values pluralism.

Berlin delineates a connection between value pluralism and the freedom of the individual. He allows for the fact that diverse ends of individuals may often conflict, and
hence one cannot posit one single notion of human good. Such insistence on one ideal formula derails liberalism, while pluralism has a close affinity to liberal policies. For him, human lives cannot be understood through only some universal idea or monist system of values and norms. Human beings are molded by their cultural practices and those cultures are very diverse because human ends are many.

For this reason, Berlin encourages efforts to understand others’ beliefs and commitments. He does not mean that one has to adopt others’ views, but should respect them as a moral priority. Such respect helps individuals avoid human miseries, even though moral incommensurability and conflicts are unavoidable elements of human life. Regardless of the conflicts, human beings can reach some compromise by understanding that human ends are many.

Berlin’s concept of value pluralism has not only left an enormous impact, but has also been surrounded with some controversies too. One of the major criticisms is that the notion of value pluralism is not much different from the notion of relativism, and also that it lacks adequate clarity. In order to understand Berlin’s view of pluralism, one first needs to understand that ‘relativism’ is the concept which holds that there is no absolute truth or validity, but rather considers everything as relative because of subjective differences in how we perceive things. Berlin’s philosophical understanding of pluralism does not lead to relativism because “the multiple values are objective, part of the essence of humanity rather than arbitrary creations of men’s subjective fancies” (2013a, p.14). He argues that his notion of value pluralism does not lead to relativism because all human values are objective and “communication and understanding of moral views is possible among all people” (Chemiss & Hardy, 2004), whereas with relativism such moral communication is not possible. In relativism, differences continue to exist since a dialogue about morality is impossible because of one’s own convictions, with no effort to understand others’ views or values. However, the
acceptance of pluralism facilitates a dialogue or moral communication; it also helps create an environment where toleration and understanding of others is possible.

Cherniss and Hardy suggest another way to differentiate between pluralism and relativism with the same method used by Berlin and others. That is, pluralism admits a basic 'core' of human values while relativism holds no such core values.

[Such core] values adopted alongside them in a particular context fall within a 'common human horizon'. This 'horizon' sets limits on what is morally permissible and desirable, while the 'core' of shared or universal values allows us to reach agreement on at least some moral issues. This view rests on a belief in a basic, minimum, universal human nature beneath the widely diverse forms that human life and belief have taken across time and place. (Cherniss & Hardy, 2004)

According to Berlin, human beings develop intuitive empathy towards others because of these common core values. Such moral sensitivity is something very distinct to the human being. According to relativism, values hold no intrinsic worth: they change according to the situation. This means that a value can be value in one situation and may not be a value in another situation. Berlin disagrees, because for him the human core values are intrinsically good and are universal. For example, liberty is a genuine value for all human beings in that it was created by them and they continue to strive for it because it correlates to the essence of human nature. Steven Lukes finds that one of the major issues people have with relativism is that it aims to avoid moral conflicts. It argues that individuals hold different values because of their difference in cultures (Cherniss & Hardy, 2004). On the other hand, pluralism aims to understand the conflicts that arise within and across cultures.

Pluralism helps overcome conflicts that arise due to different views about morality. According to Berlin, human beings overcome these conflicts because these values are created by them and are 'objective.' He uses Vico's notion of fantasia and Herder's understanding of sympathetic historical insight to explain how human beings deal with incommensurability in a pluralistic situation (which will be explored in the later section about Herder and Vico).
Berlin discovered Herder and Vico through his historical research. He admits that history deals with human pluralistic expression and clearly shows how human ideas have changed over time. In fact, he tries to prove that human history is a just proof of human diversity and plurality.

2.2 Value Pluralism and History

Berlin considers history a unique subject because it is an art which has the ability to portray human beings in a way which no other subject can do. History shows that human beings are creators who have the ability to think, feel, desire and act (Berlin, 2014, p. 264). History is an account of every individual’s story about what they have done and how they have lived. Through history, one can learn that values too are the creation of human beings. History’s approach to human life is very different from the more systematic approach of the sciences. It can be distinguished from the empirical sciences.

Karl R. Popper, a philosopher of science, writes that empirical science “constructs hypotheses, or systems of theories, and tests them against experience by observation and experiment” (2002, p. 3). Science is a highly organized subject which seeks for universal truths through various hypotheses and systematic tests. It does not answer the questions related to individual human experience, but focuses on explaining what is, how it works, and what its structures are from universal point of view. History cannot be systematized in a unified pattern, like science, to understand individual human experience.

Berlin states that:

[Human] beings, as we know because we are ourselves human, are not merely bodies in space, moving and being moved, but have purposes and motives and act as they do under the influence of other than purely physical or biological causes. (2014, p. 266)

Human purposes, their motives and the progress of history cannot be explained in the systematic method of science, but can only be understood based upon human historical
experiences which are distinct and plural in nature. Even though human beings are partly conditioned by social group interaction and cultural norms, they can transcend the cultural and the social barriers. Berlin assumes that human beings are not naturally bound by any constrains or forces. So for him, historical determinism does not help to understand the goodness of human beings.

As a historian, Berlin rejects historical determinism. The errors of historical determinism occur because many tend to confuse history with scientific laws and they tend to understand everything in the light of universal patterns (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 46). Berlin explores the problem of historical determinism and free will in Historical Inevitability (1954), and he compares and contrasts the monist and pluralist in The Hedgehog and the Fox (1953). The first essay illuminates the nature of history and the second the role of the historian. In these essays Berlin shows the importance of studying history because history reveals human beings’ pursuit of the plurality of values, ends and cultures. The study of history shows that human beings have no common purpose. This assumption helps Berlin to conclude that there is no immutable human nature or universal pattern in human behavior.

A deeper analysis of the historicity of human beings is based upon the human capacity of free will. A historical notion of human persons is worth considering. As Gray points out, “Human beings tell a diversity of narratives themselves, none of which has the authority of a meta-narrative. History on Berlin’s account will have all the unpredictability, variety and novelty one would expect from a self-transforming species” (1996, p. 74). History appeals to the world of experiential beliefs, practices, goals and ways of life which is, by nature, pluralistic. Therefore, every individual’s outlook differs, and there is no single method to find answers to all the questions which humanity proposes.

According to Berlin, any historical viewpoint is that of an observer who views events like an internal observer situated in the human condition. Berlin, in referring to the advantage
of the historical viewpoint, claims that his advantage is not that of an external observer, but of an individual similarly situated in the human condition. The historian is able to grasp the connections between individuals and their context, which is “the interplay of men with one another, of their feelings, thoughts, choices and ideas about the world or each other or themselves” (1999b, p. 129), which elude science. Berlin agrees with Herder who states that every human person has their own ideals, thoughts, choices and lifestyles (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 43). Due to this reason, utopian societies are not possible because history has shown that human beings are highly diverse in their cultural practices and moral values.

Berlin evinced an interest in historiography and qualified that “A historian is able to explain the motives and the goals and should not merely describe the succession of events” (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 123). As humans, individuals are able to grasp and understand the various cultural, moral and social notions of groups. Historicity exhibits patterns within cultures and Berlin explains that this factor is “a common style reflected in the thought, the arts, the social institutions, the language, the ways of life and action of the entire society” (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 124). Berlin introduces something he calls ‘identity in difference’ (1999b, p. 137) by stating “Identity in difference is needed because one and the same outlook can be expressed in different manifestations” (Berlin, 1999b, p. 137). The pattern he speaks of allows for value diversity and change.

The historian, to be true to diversity and to avoid subjectivism, should guard against speculation to fill in missing links, but be true to the evidence. Ultimately, this means looking at similarities and dissimilarities among cultures so that value pluralism is not obscured. History reveals a picture of diversity in values throughout the ages. Again, to overcome subjectivism, reconstruction will not permit the use of one’s own categories, but must consider how the “events must have looked to those who participated in or were affected by them” (Berlin, 1999b, p. 135).
History records the diversity of human beings’ experiences and it cannot be viewed from a narrow metaphysical teleological interpretation, which focuses on human history as being deeply connected with a higher purpose directed by a universal pattern (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 48). Berlin states that “History is an account of what men have done and of what has happened to them” (1981, p. 104). Human nature cannot be conceptualized without looking into the aspect of human will, and each person’s ideals and purposes in relation to the process of history. Vico adds “a revolutionary twist by applying it to history; we understand historical processes, which everywhere bear the stamp of human will, ideals and purposes…” (cited in Manent, Hausheer, Karpinski, & Kaiser, 1983, p. 63). History is nothing but a proof of human beings’ cultural diversity and a diversity of values. Thus, the identities of human beings are only discernible in a historical context which again reveals a diversity of values.

Berlin ridicules the notion of utopianism in the philosophy of history. Utopianism gives a false hope for a higher goal in society, and it leads to historical determinism which denies the diversity of values. The desire for utopianism does not lead to perfection in a society, but it often leads to inhumaneness and misery. History has shown many miseries that are brought about by the human desire for higher ends and perfection. Even today, some parts of the world greatly suffer because of religious fundamentalists and leaders who relentlessly force people to follow a single way of life which destroys the plurality which is the very essence of human existence. Berlin rejects utopianism because it undermines human beings’ liberty and denies their free will. For him, human beings’ purposes and motives are unpredictable because the essence of human nature is freedom (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 46), which can best be understood by following the historicity of various people. Berlin’s deeper study of the diversity of values in human history led him to investigate the very essence of human nature. The roots of Berlin’s understanding of history through value pluralism lie in his understanding of counter-enlightenment thinkers. In order to understand the counter-
2.3 The Enlightenment Movement and Counter-Enlightenment

The Enlightenment Movement is a revolutionary period in the history of Western thought and culture. The Movement holds that science and logic, rather one’s own tradition and religion, can help individuals understand the universe ("Enlightenment", 2016). The Movement lasted from the mid-seventeenth century to the eighteenth century, bringing a different way of thinking in science, philosophy, society and politics. The impact of the Enlightenment period led to a questioning of the medieval world view. The period set a milestone for the modern way of thinking and became a cause of the French Revolution, because the Enlightenment held no regard for the traditional hierarchical political and social orders. Especially, the monarchies, nobilities and authorities of the Catholic Church were replaced by a new social and political order. The reason was that the traditional rules have absolute control over the freedom and the rights of the people. The core idea of the Enlightenment aimed at upholding the principles of freedom and equality for all. These principles are based on human reason, which is very different from the medieval way of thinking. The medieval thinkers argued that God is the ultimate authority in human lives, so Church authorities have the power to control the freedom of every individual in a society. The Enlightenment’s impact also left a huge change in the field of science, resulting in a scientific revolution. These drastic changes in the field of science led to the critique of theology and the ancient conception of the universe. These changes helped philosophy to adopt new understandings of human, social and political issues. D’Alembert, a well-known thinker of the eighteenth century, credits the philosophical outcome of this time as “the century of philosophy par excellence” (Bristow, 2010), because the philosophy of the
Enlightenment aimed at improving human lives, just like science. The scientific innovations and original philosophy helped people free their minds from the ancient methods of thinking, which had little relevance for contemporary living.

The Enlightenment Movement has grown widely across the West. The Movement gave birth to many thinkers in European countries and also a wide variety of intellectual developments. Kant, a German philosopher, unpacked the notion of the Enlightenment in his essay “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” (1784). Kant describes Enlightenment as “humankind's release from its self-incurred immaturity; “immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another” (Bristow, 2010). Enlightenment has led to a deeper investigation about the creditability of one's own intellectual capacities with a view to determining what to believe/know and how to act. Enlightenment thinkers have argued that humanity has intellectual abilities through which one can develop a systematic understanding of the universe; also, this knowledge can be trusted as authoritative. Such confidence has given humanity to discard ancient traditions, religious practices, myths and blind beliefs about various elements. Such confidence in philosophy raised tensions with the Church, which upheld its authority and knowledge for many centuries. Enlightenment thoughts awakened the people's minds from their slumber and led them to pursue the better end for human existence through the new understanding of reality, aesthetics and socio-political situations.

Isaac Newton’s *Principia Mathematica* (1687) challenged the ancient and traditional way of understanding the physical world and reality. His discoveries clarified the physical phenomena that explained the functioning of the universe. His methods clearly demonstrated that nature could be understood through mathematical-dynamical laws (Bristow, 2010). This led to another leap in modern science's understanding the reality of the universe. The Enlightenment Movement studied everything from the viewpoint of reason and criticism,
which has been the central element of this Movement (Bristow, 2010). Even art and literature are not spared from this criticism because they are integral parts of human life. The study of art and literature from a different perspective has helped to promote them in an affirmative way. The criticism of art and literature enables human beings to better understand the harmony and beauty that deeply involves humans.

The Enlightenment Movement not only left a huge influence on the understanding of the natural world and the study of aesthetics, the Movement also brought massive challenge to the existing political systems of the time. The new political writing and thinking brought about three political revolutions, namely “the English Revolution (1688), the American Revolution (1775–83), and the French Revolution (1789–99)” (Bristow, 2010). These revolutions challenged the traditional authorities and the religious monopoly ruling the state. The new movements aimed for governments formed by the people and for the people. The ultimate aims for these formations have been freedom, equality and basic human rights. The Enlightenment Movement showed the worth of the individual human being. A human being deserves to be tolerated by a society in which he/she lives regardless of his/her views on religion and personal ends. All these have encouraged individuals to dream about a secular state free from religion – a state that is free and fair to pursue one’s own end. The Enlightenment Movement’s political philosophical writings indirectly instigated the political revolutions in France and America. Some notable writings of this period were Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan* (1651), Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1677), John Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government* (1690), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *On the Social Contract* (1762). These writings are very different in their arguments about the state and the individual, but they all aim for the freedom of the individual. These writings indicate that a government should be based upon rational contentment, not on myths and murky traditions. Berlin’s thoughts and writings were greatly influenced by the Enlightenment thinkers, but his
view of human freedom is very different from theirs. For him humanism and freedom are the most important elements of human existence. His arguments clearly indicate that he borrowed many of his ideas from Counter-Enlightenment thinkers like Herder and Vico.

The term ‘counter-enlightenment’ was coined by William Barrett in his article titled “Art, Aristocracy and Reason” (1949). This term has been used by other twentieth century critics regarding contrary thoughts that arose during the Enlightenment. Even though the term was coined by William Barrett, it was Isaiah Berlin who is credited for bringing it to light. Berlin wrote extensively about the Enlightenment, but he opposed many of the Enlightenment thinkers’ political views. In his highly acclaimed essay "The Counter-Enlightenment" (1973), he argued how some of the Enlightenment thinkers’ ideas have brought more miseries to the humankind than liberty. He calls them anti-rationalists and enemies of liberty because some of their arguments are directed towards moral monism and the outcome of their political ideas has led to terror and totalitarianism in societies. Many Enlightenment thinkers opposed pluralism and rejected the domination of religion as well as the social and political order based upon the traditional understanding of human nature.

Berlin states:

That human nature was fundamentally the same in all times and places; that local and historical variations were unimportant compared with the constant central core in terms of which human beings could be defined as a species, like animals, or plants, or minerals; that there were universal human goals; that a logically connected structure of laws and generalisations susceptible of demonstration and verification could be constructed and replace the chaotic amalgam of ignorance.... (Berlin, 2013, pp. 1-2)

The Enlightenment thinkers’ ideas are based upon the assumption that human ends could be easily understood through a monist principle. In reality, human beings’ ends are so varied that it is not possible to define human beings like any other species because humans are rational and their ends are many, so people continue to form themselves based upon the society which they live, pursuing their own end. Berlin argues that opinions regarding one’s beliefs, value-
judgements and institutions are very different between different societies and different times (Berlin, 2013, p. 2). All these opinions cannot be unified by a single law. Descartes’ philosophy aims to demonstrate that “a single system of knowledge, embracing all provinces and answering all questions could be established by unbreakable chains of logical arguments…” (Berlin, 2013, p. 3). History has shown that human beings go through continual changes, none of which can be verified by any scientific method or universal standard, but it can be understood only through human affairs.

Aristotle, one of the early Greek philosophers, holds that a common characteristic of all good actions is that they have a certain order or proportion. Based upon this idea, Aristotle contends that virtue is a mean between two extremes (the extremes are vices, either a vice of excess or defect). His famous saying is “Virtus in medio stat” (Virtue stands in the middle). By ‘mean’ Aristotle does not intend something that is considered as the right thing for every individual, but he believes that any ‘mean’ can be “relative to us” (Copleston, 1993, p. 336). Even though all human beings search for happiness, a ‘mean’ for each one might differ and there is incommensurability due to the differences in culture, time and various other human phenomena.

2.4 The Insights of Vico and Herder

Johann Georg Hamann, a German philosopher and a student of Herder, also opposed the Enlightenment Movement. For him, each individual is unique because human beings are not built of some particular data pattern or a scientific system (Berlin, 2013, p. 10). Anyone who tries to describe human reality by some scientific pattern, or through rationalist arrangement, can end up in error. Berlin believes that human nature cannot be studied with a set of formulae or scientific methods, because the very notion of human beings means for him plurality and liberty. Human beings’ essence is intertwined with the notion of freedom and
pluralism. He could not have this idea without the influence of thinkers like Vico and Herder. A study of the cultural history of different races, societies and groups enlightens one about the diversity of the forms of life, traditions and values. Both Vico and Herder gave importance to cultural anthropology of groups and their significance.

2.4.1 Giambattista Vico

Even though Vico accepts the Enlightenment understanding of the predetermined nature of history, he still rejects “the idea that humanity as a whole developed inevitably in linear sequence from lower to higher forms of self-consciousness and rationality.” (White, 1968). For him individuals have the ability to choose their destiny and it is based upon their free will. Individuals are not bound by myth or predestination, but they can determine their own lives self-consciously and positively which leads them to make their own history.

Human history is created through “human consciousness as it has evolved in time and space” (White, 1968). According to Vico, human ends are many and everyone determines their own end because individuals can form their own lives, “both deliberately and without conscious intention, in response to physical environment and to unintended, ‘providential’ changes in their own natures” (Berlin, 1980, p. 55).

Vico’s most famous idea is *verum-factum* which means “that one can know the truth in what one makes” (Bertland, 2008). Human minds cannot understand eternal truths, but they can understand human history because history is made by human beings (Berlin, 1980, p.55). Human beings can understand what they create or something that is created by other human beings. History is a process which evolves from the truths that are created by human beings. Human history changes over time, depending upon the change of human thought patterns which result from each individual’s cultural impact.

Vico introduces cultural pluralism, according to which each culture exhibits its own values, but it is possible for one group to understand others different from its own. In short,
If anything is meant by the term ‘human’, there must be enough that is common to all such beings for it to be possible, by a sufficient effort of imagination, to grasp what the world must have looked like to creatures remote in time or space, who practiced such rites, and used such words, and created such works of art as the natural means of self-expression involved in the attempt to understand and interpret their worlds to themselves. (Berlin, 1990b, p. 60)

Yet each culture is not alienated or incomprehensible to others. A member of one culture can understand another culture by using imaginative insight, even those remote in time and space (Berlin, 1997, p. 10). Berlin affirms Vico’s deepest belief that what is made by a human being can be understood by other human beings (1990b, p. 60). Vico admires this uniqueness of human beings to understand others regardless of one’s communities, cultures, traditions and customs and the incommensurability in their values.

There is diversity among communities, cultures, traditions and customs in society because their aims in life differ. Each person has their own individuality, a part of one’s uniqueness, and it is possible for individuals to understand the differences between cultures because of their common human nature. In his explication of human nature and its relations among social groups, Berlin explains:

Men congregate in groups because they are conscious of what unites them—bonds of common descent, language, soil, collective experience; these bonds are unique, impalpable and ultimate. Cultural frontiers are natural to men, spring from the interplay of their inner essence and environment and historical experience. (1990, p. 38)

Human nature shows itself in bonding among groups which share the same form of life. There is some identity with reference to culture, a term that has many meanings. To appreciate the various connotations of the term, one can examine the many ways in which culture is exhibited. At the basic level, it can be reflected in language, including the way in which syntax and vocabulary describe the world. The societies which share a common language share at least some cultural features in common (Parekh, 2000, p. 143). In India, this can be noticed in the country’s many linguistic states. States such as Karnataka, Tamil
Nadu, Telengana and Kerala, for instance, have their own language and specific culture. They exhibit certain distinct traditions, lifestyles, norms, peculiarities of linguistic expressions, festivals, music and dance forms.

The culture of a society is also embedded in its proverbs, maxims, rituals, symbols, collective memories, body language, modes of non-linguistic communication, customs, traditions, institutions and manner of greeting. At a deeper level, it is embodied in its art, music, literature, moral life, ideals of excellence, exemplary individuals and visions of a good life (Parekh, 2000, p. 43). Due to this, there is a wide diversity of pluralism not merely in cultural patterns, but in values themselves. Berlin addresses the nature of conflict in a pluralistic society and the need to address this issue. He terms this the ‘incommensurability of values’. To stabilize a multicultural society, the views of Berlin about pluralism are relevant in order to protect value pluralism.

Every culture expresses its life and ideals in a variety of ways. It has its own peculiarities and individualities that are distinct from others. Gray claims that for Berlin there is a common human nature, “but that it is exhibited only in the divergent natures human beings constitute for themselves, subject to the constraints of their biological and historical inheritances” (1996, p. 66). In his understanding of pluralism, Berlin himself treads a middle path between total exclusivity and total identity of values. Berlin admits “There are, if not universal values, at any rate a minimum without which societies could scarcely survive” (1997, p. 15). In case of conflict between cultures and their values, Berlin believed that compromises can be reached by taking into consideration human needs, priorities and the relevant factors of a concrete situation. No decision is absolute, but is based upon the particular context; it amounts to understanding individual differences and the presence of diverse values. He claims:

But, in the end, it is not matter of purely subjective judgment: it is dictated by the forms of life of the society to which one belongs, a society among other
societies, with values held in common whether or not they are in conflict, by the majority of mankind throughout history. (1997, p. 14)

In any analysis of human nature, the fact of irresolvable internal tensions is apparent. This leads Berlin to characterize human nature as "crooked timber," causing conflicts which persons could avoid, but do not. Yet human beings are tolerant and able to overcome conflicts in an objective way when people realize there are not two goods, but merely incompatible values behind the conflict which need to be considered (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 39).

Vico describes the true nature of cultures and individuals according to historical evidence. Each culture incorporates changes which become accessible and understandable to society at large. It is akin to an anthropological study. Berlin credited Vico with shedding light on human nature and the values of entire societies.

It is this kind of self-awareness- what men thought, imagined, felt, wanted, strove for in the face of physical nature at a particular stage of social development, expressed by institutions, monuments, symbols, ways of writing and speech, generated by their ways to represent and explain their conditions to themselves— that he wished to analyses, and he thought he found a path to it not trodden by others. (1990b, p. 62)

Berlin believed that Vico asserts that people need imagination, termed fantasia, to place themselves in a particular historical situation and to understand its cultural setting, human nature and ways of life. Concerning this fantasía, Berlin states:

Yet without fantasía, the past remains dead; to bring it to life we need , at least ideally to hear men’s voices , to conjecture (on the basis of such evidence as we can gather) what may have been their experience, their forms of expression, their values, outlook, aims, ways of living; without this we cannot grasp, not merely physically or biologically, and in a narrow sense politically and institutionally, but socially, psychologically, morally; without this there can be no genuine self-understanding. (1990b, pp. 64-65)

It is such an attitude which forms the basis for understanding the framework that constitutes human nature, as revealed by the adopted ways of life and ideals. For Berlin the scope of values and ends is finite, and he accepts the fact that human nature is modifiable. It changes
form in different cultures and environments (Lukes, 1998, p. 105). It becomes possible for each person to understand others because they share a common human nature. In emphasizing this fact, Berlin states “of course, there is a common human nature, otherwise men in one age could not understand the literature or the art of another, or, above all, its laws which Vico, as a jurist, know most” (2013a, p. 9). One can understand common human nature because it exists within the human sphere.

Berlin concedes that values must fall within the human sphere, otherwise one cannot conceive them. This indicates that his conception of human nature does admit a minimum content of morality. Berlin credits humans as having moral feelings and are apt to feel ‘revulsion’ when moral laws are broken. He thus states “When I speak of men as being normal, a part of what I mean is that he could not break these rules easily, without a qualm of revulsion” (2002, p. 211). The essence of being human suggests that individuals are able to understand the viewpoints of others due to this aspect.

The dependence of value systems upon context, that different systems assign priority to conflicting values, gives empirical weight to the plurality of values (MacKenzie, 1999, p. 326). Due to the range of diversity, Berlin states,

There are many objective ends, ultimate values incompatible with others, pursued by different societies at various times, or by different groups in the same society, by entire classes or churches or races, or by particular individuals, within them, any one of which may find itself subject to conflicting claims of uncombineable, yet equally ultimate and objective ends. (1990c, pp. 79-80)

Such an attitude forms a basis for understanding the framework of human nature as revealed by the adopted ways of life and ideals. Human nature is capable of rising above the bounds of one’s own culture or lifestyle, due to an understanding of other diverse traditions, practices and cultural patterns. Berlin clearly believes that to rise above these boundaries one must free oneself from the ideological prisons of social class or nation or religion or doctrine.

Otherwise, others’ customs and practices will continue to remain alien or may not make any
sense to someone (1990c, p. 86). One can understand the existence of differing values, although one may not agree with a value system which is not one’s own.

Berlin concedes that traditions overlap and share certain values which make possible the intercommunication between diverse groups. One can conclude that for Berlin, there is not “an irreducible incommensurability across discourses and narratives” (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 14). Value conflicts are overcome only by compromise, by giving up a value completely or at least modifying it to some extent. As mentioned, this is not an ultimate solution and is context related. Berlin’s theory focuses on human nature, wherein he puts forth a positive belief in an innate human ability to solve conflicts through value pluralism. This means the capacity to understand one another thanks to a basic human morality. Value pluralism, to Berlin, is combined with a deep study of human nature, both in its negative and positive aspects. He highlights the latter, if only to uphold certain universal values which form the anchor of a common human nature, stressing human dignity and liberty that survive in spite of much diversity. The thoughts of Herder helped Berlin understand this human diversity and people’s ability to understanding each other regardless of the differences in their culture and place.

2.4.2 Johann Gottfried Herder

According to Berlin, Herder is the father of the notion of nationalism and historicism, as well as a thinker who has critiqued classicism, rationalism and the use of scientific methods for verifying the reality of human beings (Berlin, 2013b, p. 208). Herder believes that the scientific method is not helpful to understand human beings’ activities and their civilization process, because every activity and situation has a unique character. The scientific method tends to analyse facts based primarily upon universal rules. Such a method can destroy the real differences and the uniqueness found in human activities in different places and times. The scientific method may help understand the natural world, but such a method is not
applicable to the understanding of ethics, aesthetics and social patterns. So Herder introduced a new method to understand social patterns, by rejecting rationalism (which functions with a narrow method) to understand the natural world and human beings more broadly. In the process of creating his new method for understanding the human social pattern, he "stimulated the growth of particularism, nationalism and literary, religious and political irrationalism, and thereby to have played a major role in transforming human thought and action in the generation that followed" (Berlin, 2013b, p. 209). He fought against the domination of the rationalism of his time, showing the importance of understanding human beings through poetic and historical imagination. The Enlightenment thoughts revolutionized the study of natural science, but Herder argued that such a study underestimated the uniqueness of the human spirit. His approach to a new way of understanding the human spirit is completely different from his contemporary thinkers; Berlin calls his approach "populism, expressionism and pluralism" (Berlin, 2013b, p. 210). Herder created a new awareness which has helped distinguish various manifestations of the human spirit or humanness, which may belong to a different community or historical period.

Herder believes that "people are what they are" (Berlin, 2013, p. 332) because one is influenced by the environment in which one is embedded and the characters therein. One begins, first in a non-reflective manner and then hopefully with intentionality and discernment, to envision an end toward which one intends to move, which one believes will make one's life worthwhile. Everyone is formed by cultural factors and the morals of one's own social structure. For Herder, the sense of belonging also plays an important role in one's formation because it gives a direction to one's intrinsic sense of being human. The sense of belonging to a particular society or nation causes a uniqueness he calls one's particularism. He "compared national cultures in many lands and periods, and held that every society had what he called its own centre of gravity, which differed from that of others" (Berlin, 1997, p.
8). For him, human beings embrace different ends because of their pluralistic nature. These ends are fully rational regardless of being pluralistic in nature. Even though human beings have different ends, they are "capable of understanding each other and sympathizing and deriving light from each other['s] .... worlds, outlook, very remote from our own" (Berlin, 1997, p. 9). Berlin's notion of the sympathetic understanding of diverse cultural forms is akin to the imaginative insights of Herder. Berlin emphasizes the need to see the past through the eyes of those who lived through it, and credits Herder for introducing this method to the study of history. Even though human beings possess this unique ability understand the remote aspect of others' values and cultures, still incommensurability is an unavoidable factor in one's life. Intercommunication is always possible between different cultures and values in different times and places because these values and cultures are the creation of human beings. One is free to criticize other's values or cultures, but "one cannot pretend not to understand them at all" (Berlin, 1997, p. 9). If one makes a sufficient effort to use one's imaginative insight, then that could build a bridge between the varied values and cultures.

Herder addressed the uniqueness of national cultures and their incommensurability. He studied the "variety of the paths of development of civilization, past and present, European and Asian, of which the new interest in oriental scholarship, the languages of India and Persia provided much convincing concrete evidence" (Berlin, 1990b, p. 55). It reveals the goals held by mankind at different stages, their ideals, customs, forms of behavior, social norms, virtue, justice and their notion of happiness. Berlin contends it was Herder's study that led to the understanding that there are many cultures, each of which follows various values differing from each other. Sometimes the cultural values are incompatible with each other, "yet capable of being understood, that is seen by observers endowed with sufficiently acute and sympathetic historical insight, as ways of living which human beings could pursue and remain fully human" (1990b, p. 58). For Herder, being fully human means to understand
others’ differences and recognize them, in some way, as one’s own. This kind of recognition can help the world overcome any human miseries that are happening in the world due to war, greed or the need to control others’ lives. Besides Vico and Herder, Berlin has been deeply impressed by John Stuart Mill’s notion of individual liberty and diversity.

2.5 Value Pluralism and the Pluralism of Mill

Berlin’s notion of value pluralism speaks of the incommensurability of goods. There is a vast diversity of valuable options among which choices must be made. Value pluralism takes into account a society’s traditional social practices as well as the restrictions that a government can impose upon its people’s value systems. Mason affirms that all values have equal standing, none of them can be considered weaker than other values, and all values ought to be tolerated for their own sake (2006). As Gray points out concerning Berlin’s viewpoint, “Different cultural forms will generate different moralities and values containing overlapping features no doubt, but also specifying different and incommensurable, excellences, virtues and conception of the good” (1996, p. 43). Not all goods are compatible. As Gray further comments on the implications of value pluralism, he says that it rules out any utilitarian or consequentialist ethics, which depend upon the possible aggregation of utilities or sum total of consequences (1996, p. 58).

The core of Berlin’s political thought is about negative liberty. Berlin stated:

The sense of freedom in which I use this term entails not simply the absence of frustration (which may be obtained by killing desires), but the absence of obstacles to possible choices and activities – the absence of obstructions on roads along which a man can decide to walk. (2002, p. 32)

While there are difficulties in applying negative liberty and value pluralism to modern democratic theory, these difficulties are not insurmountable.

Pluralism is part of a democracy committed to secular values. One can support the claim that value pluralism recognizes the liberty of individuals. Berlin states that the world
one inhabits has many values, so one needs to make a constant effort to choose the better values "which inevitably involve the sacrifice of others. Indeed, it is because this is their situation that men place such immense value upon the freedom to choose" (2002, p. 213).

Having freedom to choose means one acts rationally and makes the right decision in choosing one’s own end with meaning and purpose. Galston is clear in his assertion that liberal pluralism affirms what Gray denies: that value pluralism is consistent with and lends support to negative liberty (2002, p. 63). In his reference to a value pluralist state, Galston claims:

It will seek to create conditions within which, to the greatest extent possible, individuals and groups can lead their lives in accordance with their own understanding of what gives life meaning and purpose. And it will vigorously defend the ability of individuals to exit from ways of life with which they have ceased to identify. (2002, p. 62)

Pluralism favors a diversity of cultures and would not therefore cater to a repressive political theory that would undermine the multiplicity of values embedded in a social matrix. Gray pointed to a valid criterion by stating "It is worth emphasizing that, though the forms of life human beings invent for themselves are immensely diverse, they are not, in Berlin’s account of them for that reason inaccessible or incommunicable to one another" (1996, p. 72). Gray agrees that pluralism is an undeniable factor of human life. The issue of pluralism is too vast for any scholar to study and understand in one lifetime. Berlin’s study of pluralism showcases how values can be incommensurable.

Mill favors a diversity of cultures and argues for individual freedom. He believes that an individual must be free from any coercion or social pressure. A society has no right to coerce anyone’s opinions and behavior in any way, but he accepts that a society can coerce an individual whose behavior can be harmful to others. According to Mill, society must accept diversity and liberty with respect. He justifies the concept of liberty through a utilitarian approach. Liberty is a means of progressing in society while enabling an individual to pursue his/her ends. Mill was trained by his father to understand everything under the light
of rationalism and materialism. Berlin accepts his notion of freedom and diversity, but he fears Mill’s approach to human beings as “a natural object and considered that a systematic study of the human species - conducted on lines similar to those of zoology or botany or physics - could and should be established on firm empirical foundations” (Berlin, 2002. p.220). Mill’s upbringing by his father “made him into a monster of rationality, a desiccated calculating machine, with no capacity for natural and spontaneous feeling or artistic and poetic sensibility” (Bendle, 2009). Berlin finds many philosophers in the past made such mistakes in viewing human beings as objects, then created many theories which have resulted in the many miseries of human history. Mill acknowledges that happiness is the only end for human beings; he also accepts that human beings can have “diversity, versatility, fullness of life - the unaccountable leap of individual genius, the spontaneity and uniqueness …” (Berlin, 2002. p. 221). Berlin finds Mill’s views about the real essence of human end inadequate; because man’s sole pursuit was happiness, it did not matter how this happiness was achieved. Such ideas can lead an individual to pursue values which are not acceptable by ethical norms. For example, Mill supported the rule of the East India Company in India, even knowing its inhumane activities against the indigenous people of India (Berlin, 2002, p. 224), but in his writing he opposed state’s interference in individuals’ affairs. Berlin illustrates that,

[Mill’s] conception of human nature is pronounced too narrow and altogether inadequate; he has no imaginative grasp of history or society or individual psychology; he does not understand either what holds, or what should hold, society together – common ideals, loyalties, national character; he is not aware of honour, dignity, self-culture, or the love of beauty, order, power, action; he understands only the 'business aspects of life. (2002, p. 225)

Mill’s argues that human nature is unchangeable and can be understood through the study of scientific methods. He values happiness as the ideal rather than human life itself. Berlin argues that human ends cannot be solely aimed towards happiness. Human ends are plural in nature which cannot be appreciated solely through the views of utilitarianism. Berlin finds such studies irrational and ignorant of the reality of human plurality.
Mill provides a theory of liberty based on consequences and defends democracy wherein he claims people understand issues, develop points of view and implement desires thorough political involvement unlike despotism (Bowie & Simon, 1977, p. 131). The focus of utilitarianism is the consequences preferred by the general population, or at least those affected. Mill’s position is one of qualitative utilitarianism having the greatest good of the greatest number. The aim of Mill is the rational development of the individual. Berlin differs from Mill in rejecting that rationalism can provide answers to the political and moral dilemmas that arise. Gray points out that a major difference of Berlin’s view from liberal utilitarianism by stating:

Berlin’s rejection of the idea of an essential individual self that is discovered through choice making makes his conception of self-creation more radically voluntaristic than that of the liberals, such as J. S. Mill who were influenced by Romanticism. (1996, p. 32)

A serious drawback of a utilitarian approach in a political sphere is that any system that passes the utilitarian test will have to be taken as be a better form of government even if it happens to be totalitarian.

Berlin’s pluralism is differentiated from the pluralism advocated by Mill, which in many ways is opposed to that of Berlin. Although both favor human diversity, Berlin’s views attempt to overcome some of the shortcomings of Mill’s theory. Each person has needs and goals unique to him/her. A liberal democratic society must cater to the many varieties of life, promoting human happiness. Yet Mill takes for granted that the higher pleasures will be moral and intellectual in character, rather than bodily and sensuous. If human nature as he asserts contains diversity and individuality, then different people will adopt various ways to develop their human capabilities. Mill did not take note of the fact that an individual may contain within oneself the desire to overcome conflicting ends. Thus, Mill does not face the reality of conflict that lies within human nature itself.
In contrast, Berlin considers the nature of radical choice brought about by the complexity and conflicting needs of individual nature (Gray, 1996, pp. 59-60). Mill’s views are invariably linked to utilitarianism, which is also opposed to Berlin’s views. There cannot be, for Mill, undecidable dilemmas, and therefore, he dismisses the notion of radical choices without setting the grounds or features which are explored by Berlin’s value pluralism (Gray, 1996, p. 61). Mill assumes that the aggregate of pleasure of different groups leads to happiness, which is debatable. Berlin opposes the idea of Mill’s happiness because he believes that value pluralism stands for the ethical and political choices of individual persons. A view of the utilitarian kind prescribes a code of uniform restrictions on the enjoyment of liberty notwithstanding the fact that some values may conflict intrinsically. While Mill theory is a perfectionist who believes one’s destiny consists in perfecting oneself, Berlin’s view entails the rejection of a such a perfect ideal. Berlin’s theory does not cater to utilitarian standards as the solution to protect diversity of interests which is endorsed by the researcher.

2.6 Pluralism and Choice

Pluralism offers one solution to resolve conflicts by making decisions based upon context specific criteria, which is similar to the notion of dharma. Crowder goes one step further and suggests another possibility by reference to the conceptualist account. This view states that the concept of pluralism contains principles that can guide ethical and political choices, not just within a particular framework, but universally. He refers to four such principles (Crowder, 2008).

The first principle is respect for plurality; one should respect every option with in the range of genuine human values. Pluralism believes that there are many intrinsic goods, that is, goods valued for their own sake. To take pluralism seriously means to treat each of these goods as equal to one another. Each is no less significant. Thus, it opposes the monist
thinkers who emphasize certain values to such an extent that they overrule competing values. One can respect a value even if one does not choose it. To develop such respect, value pluralism does not promote every good in every case; this is not possible. One may have to choose against a good in some particular case, but this is not done with indifference, but with a reason (Crowder, 2008).

The second principle is value diversity. Given its respect for plurality, pluralism commits to the promotion of more goods rather than fewer; this is value diversity. Liberalism supports such a policy. Its principles of individual liberty, tolerance and personal autonomy make the conditions possible for individuals to follow a wide range of purposes. Unless one has a reason to choose, pluralism promotes a full range of values. When a choice must be made, it requires one to choose in the right spirit and for a legitimate reason. Since values can conflict, they cannot be blindly accepted. The diversity argument is suitable for social types of liberalism, which balances individual liberty against equality and social justice, rather than classical or laissez-faire liberalism with its negative liberty or non-interference, favoring the free market above all other considerations. Berlin attacks laissez-faire liberalism because it maximizes negative liberty in society, but ignores other significant values like social justice, equality and compassion (Crowder, 2008). In an Indian context, ‘value diversity’ means to accept the traditional values of all groups. The Constitution of India emphasizes the importance of accepting the values of various groups based upon their cultures, religions and regions. The Constitution of India does not prevent people from following their own religious laws or their way of life. In fact, many policies in India encourage the states to promote their local languages, cultures and literatures stemming from various traditional values. The Constitution supports diversity, but some religious fundamentalists think that they have the right to dictate to others how they should live. Such interference creates difficulties for the plurality and diversity of the nation, which will be explored in the fourth chapter.
The third principle of value pluralism is reasonable disagreement. A prudent form of politics will accommodate this ideal. Liberalism, with its belief in accepting various forms of the good, can support this principle (Crowder, 2008).

The last principle is individual autonomy. The pluralist notion of reasonable disagreement shows that one cannot resolve conflicts simply by an appeal to tradition or utilitarian goals. One must be autonomous to choose, taking into consideration all aspects including those that conflict with rules and customs. Berlin states,

For if the essence of men is that they are autonomous beings - authors of values, of ends in themselves, the ultimate authority of which consists precisely in the fact that they are willed freely - then nothing is worse than to treat them as if they were not autonomous, but natural objects, played on by causal influences, creatures at the mercy of external stimuli, whose choices can be manipulated by their rulers, whether by threats of force or offers of rewards. (2002, p. 183)

An individual is an autonomous being who chooses his/her own values. An individual cannot be forced into any ideology because there is nothing as essential as one’s own end. Pluralism demands that one be autonomous in making decisions among conflicting values. Since individual autonomy is the main feature of liberalism, it can support individual autonomy to the maximum extent (Crowder, 2008).

In conclusion, Crowder contends that Berlinian value pluralism is not open to strict neutrality, but tends towards the neutrality of a more relaxed kind: a broad accommodation of many goods and diverse ways of life. These principles underline Berlin’s notion of the human essence, which demands the capacity for choice because every human being is independent and free (Berlin, 2013b, p. 251). Berlin accepts that human beings naturally differ and are divided beings forced “to choose between reason and emotion, duty and desire, private and public demands, and irreconcilable political values…” (Bendle, 2009). Human beings have free will and the ability to choose as long as they live in a free society. According to Berlin, a free society is a better place for people because it can accept the diversity of human beings
“through its democratic institutions, the forum in which this conflict could be managed safely” (Ignatieff, 1998, p. 203). The core issue for Berlin is that any society should recognize the complexity of human nature and let human beings have the freedom to make decisions based upon their own choices. For Berlin, the notion of freedom has an enormous impact on one’s choices.

Freedom cannot be curtailed in favor of other’s ends, which he clearly expresses in the following words:

To avoid glaring inequality or widespread misery, I am led to sacrifice some or all of my freedom... but a sacrifice is not an increase in what is being sacrificed, namely freedom, however great the moral need or compensation for it. (Berlin, 2002, p. 172)

Freedom cannot be replaced with other values such as equality, fairness, justice, happiness or peace. A liberal democratic atmosphere must promote human liberty and treat humans as rational beings, able to think, decide and choose their own end. Such procedures aim at the humanization of the individual, which gives people the freedom to choose while the State gives them the opportunity to make choices. According to Berlin’s argument, nothing can be negotiated in the name of liberty because liberty is the very essence of being human, which he repeatedly argues in his philosophy. Many thinkers argue about pluralism, but Berlin’s notion of value pluralism has much more to offer to nations or to any group of people who aim to preserve a plurality of values.

2.7 Why Berlin?

Berlin’s understanding of value pluralism emerges from his genuine interest in understanding human miseries because of the political situation of his time. For this reason, one can affirm that his philosophy is more humane and natural in relation to human experiences and their historical roots. Berlin is an outsider in regard to the social and the political issues of India, but his thoughts are relevant for any nation which struggles with the
issues of pluralism and liberty. India as a democratic nation has changed so much over the years precisely because some scholars have voiced their opposition to some evil social and political practices. Still, India needs to address some of its lingering social and political issues which are influenced by traditional and religious practices. Berlin's philosophy seems to have some answers for the issues that India is facing today. His philosophy aims at individual identity and avoids making generalization or developing a theory based upon a single historical event or evidence. He struggles against other theories and ideologies which reduce human beings' ends to a single scheme. He has defended his argument for plurality for the sake of an individual's freedom, dignity and worth. His search for understanding human ends, suffering, degradation, human nature, and the complexity of rational choices have helped to explain humans' pluralistic nature.

Berlin was not embarrassed to showcase the human misery that has arisen due to authoritarian governments whose ideologies were based upon fanatically narrow views. As a philosopher, he realizes a unique call to help humanity through his thoughtful search. Philosophy is one of the disciplines by which one seeks to explain human conditions and understand them. Quite literally, the term "philosophy" means "love of wisdom." In a broad sense, philosophy is an activity people undertake when they seek to understand the fundamental truths about themselves, the world in which they live, and their relationships to the world and each other. Berlin, in taking up the subject of philosophy, is convinced that no one solution is possible to many of the questions about values which one often raises. At the outset, he clarifies that philosophical questions are not empirical or formal. As he states "Philosophy then is not an empirical study: not the critical examination of what exists or does not exist – this is dealt with by common sense knowledge and belief, and the methods of the natural sciences" (Berlin, 1999a, p. 9). In the process of philosophizing, one engages in critical thinking: an intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully
conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to understanding the plurality of human action. Berlin as a professional philosopher, and his tendency to connect political, historical and cultural issues to deeper moral and epistemological questions, set his work apart from that of other historians and "public intellectuals" of his day (Cherniss & Hardy, 2004). His efforts ended in not only understanding various human issues that arose in his time, but also underlining the philosophical ideology that caused immense complications for human freedom. It is a duty of philosopher to point out the issues of society, and to help contemporaries understand the liberty inherent in human nature. The world has witnessed many wars and human miseries arising from the bad ideologies of individuals who do not respect the liberty of individuals nor understand plurality of society. Berlin states:

Men are not simple enough, human lives and relationships are too complex for standard formulas and neat solutions, and attempts to adapt individuals and fit them into a rational schema, conceived in terms of a theoretical ideal, be the motives for doing it never so lofty, always lead in the end to a terrible maiming of human beings, to political vivisection on an ever increasing scale. (1994, p. 193)

Berlin does not believe in coercing people to follow a rational schema, because such things can lead to undesirable ends rather than a genuine solution. Berlin critiques the idea of moral monism because human beings cannot get therein a genuine answer to the questions about the moral, social and political world. "The enemy of pluralism is monism – the ancient belief that there is single harmony of truths into which everything, if it is genuine, in the end must fit" (Berlin, 1998, p. 56). Human beings' moral life, social life, political organization and personal relationships can be best understood through the truths which are related to the correct philosophical methods (Berlin, 1998, p. 26). Philosophy is always about coming to an understanding about oneself, humankind, the world and one's responsibilities. As such,
philosophy by its very nature involves the element of self-examination and relates to the function of persons as realized within a social milieu (Berlin 1999a, p. 11). Gray states that:

There is nothing subjectivist in contemporaneous Berlin’s account of value pluralism, if only because, though he conceives of individual identities as products of self-creation through choice making, he perceives that such choice making occurs always in a context of the inherited choices of earlier generations and the contemporaneous choices of others. (1996, p. 72)

The fact that values are dependent upon a group or tradition or a social norm is evident. Social practices create an identity within a group, so that its individual members, to a large extent, are conditioned by this factor, in effect one’s own choice. This fact forms part of the rationale behind many decisions.

Pluralist societies do exhibit group solidarity in decision making, a mark of their established practices. Therefore, for Berlin, the outlooks of individuals differ so there can be no universal answer to all moral, social and political questions (1998, p. 8). Thus, human ideals are not objective truths written by an ultimate being, but they are practiced and created by someone who lives them in a day-to-day life. German romantics believed that human values are generated by every age and culture. “So, too, life is created by those who live it, step by step” (Berlin, 1998, p. 11). Every individual creates his/her own life based upon his/her understanding of the universe and the place where he/she lives. At the end, each individual has the power over their own life and is responsible for whatever they do. Human beings strive to find answers to the fundamental issues and values that are related to the world and how they should direct their lives. In the process of philosophical search, one tries to understand about the real world, “about the foundations of the arts and the sciences, about the concept and categories in terms of which they think and speak” (Berlin, 1996c, p. 73). Berlin further states that this is why philosophy is a continuous search for new answers in any given situation which constantly change in every age. In the process of philosophical search, one must not sacrifice either to the past or to the future, but one must focus on “the existence of a
minimum area of civil liberty within which an individual may think and do what he pleases because he pleases it” (1996c, p. 75). It is an open-ended enterprise.

Links to Berlin’s pluralism and its compatibility with liberalism can be seen in his discussion of the nature of philosophy and political life. He states, “Men cannot live without seeking to describe and explain the universe to themselves” (Berlin, 1999a, p. 10). As Ferrell explained, particular questions do not lend themselves to a single particular answer, but instead reveal a variety of responses. Philosophy is an open-ended endeavor with a variety of perspectives. Philosophy assures a form of pluralism (2009, p. 297). As Berlin states “If philosophy were to exclude all approaches to a given question but one, it would become monistic or reductive -- it would be little more than dogmatism” (1996c, p. 59). This is a clear acknowledgment of the need for plural ends in human life. His philosophy aimed at enabling individuals to be free and to find answers for themselves. Helping an individual to recognize liberty makes an enormous difference, whereas forcing them to submit to a single method is simply evil.

2.8 Conclusion

Berlin’s philosophy points to a diversity of human interests and a plurality of values. He upholds each persons’ dignity, worth and liberty by showing how individuals struggle to make the right choice when so many values seem equally important. Human lives are a constant struggle due to the incommensurabilities among values. So it is necessary for human beings to have the freedom to make right decisions without being forced by anyone. The very act of choosing is an important expression of each individual, which is the essential nature of oneself. A person’s life is a faced with a plurality of values such that what one chooses in daily activities based upon these values cannot be unified under a single principle. So Berlin suggests that it is better to tolerate and understand others’ values rather than impose any
authoritarian rule to oppress one’s freedom. Pluralistic ends are a human expression which requires freedom to live as a human being. In an authoritarian environment, one cannot pursue goals as one may wish, but in a humane environment one can pursue freedom. For Berlin, pluralism is a valid reality in human lives. It involves toleration and liberal consequences which are observed in human history (1998, p. 53). His understanding of pluralism and its relation to liberty originates from Vico and Herder, but he developed the concept of value pluralism with the sense of humane and practical wisdom. Throughout his writings, he argues how the history of Western philosophy has ignored the significance of pluralism in individual persons’ lives. His notion of pluralism not only argues for multiple values, but also reflects the essence of being human. His philosophy shows how to deal with the issues of pluralism and work with conflicts, rather than to oppress people in the name of an ideology, religion, or political method.
CHAPTER 3  
BERLIN'S POLITICAL THEORY

Berlin’s ideas of value pluralism and freedom are the central notion of his political theory. In other words, one can see his political philosophy evolving as he elucidates the notion of value pluralism and liberty. His political theory mainly aims at the freedom of individuals and their multiple ends which oppose moral monism. According to Berlin, moral monism leads to greater human miseries because it naturally curtails individuals’ freedom to pursue their pluralistic goals as individuals. He equates fully human realization with freedom and diversity. Yet moral monism has dominated Western philosophy for several centuries. Berlin finds that moral monism is deeply rooted in the formation of the authoritarian structures of the twentieth century (Crowder, 2008, p. 147). Moral monism limits human freedom because it does not believe in the plurality of human values, rather it claims that all ethical choices have a single correct answer connected to a single and harmonious moral system (Berlin, 2002, p. 214). It simply undermines human nature because “[the] necessity of choosing between absolute claims is then an inescapable characteristic of the human condition” (Berlin, 2002, p. 214). Therefore, the value of freedom to make such choices is an undeniable requirement in persons’ lives, but such freedom can only be promoted in a liberal democratic political environment which appreciates pluralism and accommodates diversity.

Individual persons may have to make hard choices in their daily living because of the incommensurability of values they face. Freedom is a requirement for any person to use practical reasoning in their decision-making. So plurality is enhanced in a democratic liberal society, which will be explored in the later section of this chapter. Berlin’s notion of freedom is deeply linked to the notions of value pluralism and the dignity of individual persons. He believes that the cruelty and coercion we humans face in our daily living are the result of not
recognizing the individual persons’ diversity and freedom of choice. In the previous chapter, the researcher has explained how pluralism is deeply rooted in human nature and plays a major role in the moral decisions of individuals. The plurality in human nature is shown in the unpredictability of human motivations throughout history, because their ends are not identical. Pluralism is a valid reality in human lives which can flourish in a liberal environment. Value pluralism and liberalism are not only compatible, but complementary because they play major roles in shaping human beings. Individuals can realize themselves as human beings when they have an environment which embodies pluralistic views then “toleration and liberal consequences follow” (Berlin, 2013a, p.15). In Two Concepts of Liberty, Berlin argues that it is necessary for the individual person to have at least a minimal degree of negative liberty to survive as in any society.

3.1 Negative Liberty

Berlin’s concept of negative liberty focuses on freedom from interference. It refers to the absence of obstacles to what one wants to do in order to achieve an end.

I am normally said to be free to the degree to which no human being interferes with my activity. Political liberty in this sense is simply the area within which a man can do what he wants. If I am prevented by other persons from doing what I want I am to that degree unfree, and if the area within which I can do what I want is contracted by other men beyond a certain minimum, I can be described as being coerced, or, it may be, enslaved. (2002, p. 169)

This freedom is simply the absence of coercive interference by the state, society or other individuals. This kind of freedom requires a number of choices one can make during their life. So the state or society must offer various options from which an individual can choose. The choices can vary depending on the need or interest of an individual, but ultimately the individual is not restricted to any particular choice. It is up to the individual to do what they want to take advantage of the opportunities. “The extent of a man’s negative liberty is, as it were, a function of what doors, and how many are open to him; upon what prospects they
open; and how open they are” (Berlin 2002, p. 41). A state or society should be a place where an individual has many doors open, whether one chooses to go through them or not. Thereby, choices mean a greater freedom to live or pursue ends as human being in society or state. The emphasis is on the freedom granted to choose from among multiple options.

Any restrictions imposed by other people can obstruct my freedom, which means my choices are limited so I cannot live as a human. Denying negative freedom to an individual can mean depersonalization of the individual and degrade one’s humanity (Chemiss, 2013, p. 190). In such situations, one is limited to making poor choices in life, which means one is not able to function as a full human being.

Berlin makes a clear distinction between limitations brought by other human beings, by nature or by the human body. He does not consider the limitations caused by nature or by the human body as related to political freedom. Warburton states that political freedom requires a relationship of power which is shared between an individual and the state in an amicable manner (2001, p. 6). According to Berlin, true freedom means that nobody interferes with one’s activities. “Political liberty in this sense is simply the area within which a man can act unobstructed by others” (Warburton, 2001, p. 6). One can be deprived of political liberty or freedom only if one is prevented from achieving some end as a human being. Ultimately, political freedom must help individuals to be human beings. A person needs to have freedom from interference of other human beings and the State. A person needs to be treated as a human being, not as a child or as a slave “even though it is to promote their happiness and peace’ or the right to stray from the proper path even though [negative] liberty can lead to sin, suffering and punishment” (Chemiss 2013, p. 190). For this reason, Berlin rejects the utilitarian understanding of liberty as happiness, but rather values individual worth as a human being. For Berlin, liberty is liberty. It cannot be replaced with other values like
happiness, equality and peace. Liberty means to have no interference from the state or any other individual, so that one can attain one’s goal as a human being.

Many would wonder if this notion of negative liberty is suitable for India because many people in India believe in various religions and are deeply rooted in various cultural values. For many people, it is difficult to live a life without relating to their religious beliefs and cultural roots. The majority of Indians believe in Hinduism. However, other Indians believe in different religious traditions: animism, Jainism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, etc. Nations like India need democracy where people are allowed to choose what they want, while at the same time there has to be some direction for everyone’s well-being and the development of the nation. If people are ruled without any interference, then they might aspire to an irrational end rather than a rational one. When political authority is vested in a democratic government, its policies need to ensure that the conditions for the secure life of its citizens are provided. Pluralism, in Indian context, is the very soul of democracy.

The core element of negative liberty is non-interference, whereas human beings need some special institution or environment offering choices in order to develop their capacity to attain their liberty. Any democratic institution causes interference by positing regulations to be followed by its citizens. Without prudent intervention, a nation like India will end in trouble.

Negative liberty refers to the options that are available to individuals. However, where there are several options but disagreement about which is best, some political judgment is necessary, but such a judgment must be based upon factual information. If one or the other judgment is taken into account, the people who will be affected by the decision may either agree with or question its moral principle (Miller, 2003, p. 41). All these factors form part of democratic decision making. Political authorities are often faced with dilemmas and must resolve them depending upon the pressing need of the particular situation. Those who make
the decision may be a political body of selected members who may not be gifted with special insight, but have to rely upon their innate prudence. It is precisely by making such decisions that they are able to create harmony in conflicting situations, but often not without some compromises.

Democracy involves entrusting power to a small group of elected representatives whose political authority is justified as it seeks to protect a pluralism of interests in the best way possible. Miller takes up a case in point for such justification—religious freedom. Any religious believer would want to practice his/her religion freely. However, the possibility exists that one particular religion may not be in favor. If the right to freedom of worship is included in the constitution, then one can be assured of the option to practice one’s religion (2003, p. 51). The elected representatives in a democratic government protect the interests of society as a whole by secular policies enshrined in the constitution of the country. Democracy caters to the demands of pluralism by constitutional laws that cannot be violated. Pluralism can only exist where there is at least a minimal level of basic liberty for each individual. In this way, secularism is not a threat to religion.

The idea of ‘basic liberty’ means that positive and negative liberty are distinct, yet Berlin refers to liberty *simpliciter* as a value in itself. He upholds the intrinsic value of liberty as a basic condition for a decent human life and for the value of negative liberty as part of basic liberty (Cherniss, 2013, p. 194). According to Berlin, choice is a necessary element in human identity, rationality, morality, dignity, and sense of self; “to be free to choose, and not to be chosen for, is an inalienable ingredient in what makes a human being human” (2002, p. 52). Freedom connotes the choices, options and alternatives provided. Negative liberty is one part of freedom and the other is self-mastery, the positive liberty.
3.2 Positive Liberty

Berlin refers to the positive concept of ‘liberty’ by which each individual is self-directed. He asserts:

I wish my life and decisions to depend on myself, not on external forces of whatever kind. I wish to be the instrument of my own, not other men’s acts of will... I wish above all, to be conscious of myself as a thinking, willing, active being bearing responsibility for my choices and able to explain them by references to my own ideas and purposes. (2002, p. 178)

Positive liberty means to act as a fully human being. However, this kind of liberty is considered harmful where political theories control one’s decisions; the rule of such a state could become despotism. This fear of positive liberty is of grave concern. In upholding value pluralism, Berlin believed that there cannot be one unitary view of human good. Many values may conflict with one another in principle. He therefore makes the claim:

If as I believe the ends of men are many and not all of them are in principle compatible with one another, then the possibility of conflict and tragedy can never be wholly eliminated from human nature, either personal or social. The possibility of choosing between alternative claims is... an inescapable characteristic of the human condition. (2002, p. 214)

Berlin expresses his fear of positive liberty, because this notion opens the door to oppression. The positive theories deal with a higher and a lower self, or a rational and an empirical self. The higher or rational self aims at self-realization, whereas the lower or empirical self deals with fulfilling only physical desires. Berlin believes that positive theories of freedom have historically been used to justify some kind of oppression, which is a relatively short step from saying that freedom involves self-mastery to the justification of all kinds of state interference in the lives of individuals (Warburton, 2001, p. 12). He seems to fear positive liberty, because he tends to view it from his historical perspective. Berlin is emphatic in his assertion that it is wrong to impose prescribed ways of life, or the choice between an inadequate array of overly-constraining alternatives, because doing so would force individuals to go against their own characters and needs. To impose a rigid “‘either/or’ was ‘petty tyranny,’ an ‘intolerable
form of bullying.’ Individuals should be allowed ‘a certain elasticity’ in order to ‘realize themselves as they wish’ ” (cited in Cherniss, 2013 p. 196).

Even though positive liberty can be a problem if options are insufficient, in some cases it seems to help the betterment of democracy. As mentioned above, India has many religions, which creates pluralism in the nation. In recent days, however, the nation has seen a sudden rise in Hindu and Islamic fundamentalism, which is a concern to the smooth functioning of the country’s democracy. Political machinery attempts to keep in check religious conflicts by seeking to promote secular values. The Indian economist Amartya Sen upholds positive liberty because he sees it as a better option for promoting secular values in the country. It is worth considering his views on liberty and pluralism in the Indian context.

3.2.1 Freedom through Capability

Sen is well known for his ‘capability approach,’ which involves the freedom of individual persons. Ingrid finds two main normative claims for Sen’s capability approach. The first is, one must have freedom to realize well-being, and people reach freedom through their own capability. The second is “that freedom to achieve well-being is to be understood in terms of people’s capabilities, that is, their real opportunities to do and be what they have reason to value” (Ingrid, 2011). It focuses upon individual persons’ “effective freedom to achieve valuable states of beings and doings” (Olsaretti, 2003, p. 1). This approach argues that human development is possible only when individuals are supported by their society to attain the ends which value the freedom of every person. The bottom line of this approach is, freedom is essential to achieve well-being and it depends upon each persons’ ability to do and to be what they want. In philosophical literature, the term ‘capability approach’ is also known as capability theory, but the meaning remains the same. This approach is flexible and context oriented. It aims at analyzing individual persons’ well-being, critically evaluating the social
arrangement and determining policies for social change in a society (Ingrid, 2011). In the end, this approach helps the individual to realize one’s ‘being and doing’ in society.

Sen’s ‘capability approach’ has relevance to any democratic entity, because for him a democratic atmosphere promotes every person’s capability to become fully human. This approach helps individuals flourish by using their capabilities, provided they have the freedom to do so. According to capability theory, individuals should use their reason to live a life worth living, with all its necessities. “Rationality includes the use of reasoning to understand and assess goals and values, and it also involves the use of these goals and values to make systematic choices.” (Sen, 2004, p. 46) According to Berlin, an individual has “the capacity for free choice” (Chemiss, 2013, p. 191), but for Sen capacities also help individuals attain their well-being. Nussbaum has a similar notion about individuals’ ability to attain greater well-being. It depends upon how each person wants to execute this freedom. Not exercising one’s freedom or autonomy can lead to domination by someone else. When one does not make up one’s mind on a rational basis, then one tends to depend upon another agent who will control one’s freedom and eventually even their well-being.

After Rousseau, many philosophers explored the concept of freedom in relation to human capabilities. Sen sees freedom as “the capability to live as one would choose. It includes the capability for effective social agency, the ability to participate in joint activities and achieve one’s goals in them” (Bohman, 1997, p. 343). Individuals need freedom to be efficient, so that they can achieve a social, political, or religious end (Bohman, 1997, p. 327). Humans have ends which differ according to their reasoning capability, their emotional commitment to a religious belief or various external drives. Such diversities can lead the individuals to demand fulfillment of their needs (Sen, 1999, p. 156). A liberal democratic environment empowers individuals to make demands for their needs if the polity fails to provide for them. Such demands cannot be made in non-democratic nations where the state
controls their citizens' freedom. In a democracy, on the other hand, people's direct participation defines individual freedom. Sen's notion of capability approach requires more efforts from the individual person; also, the state needs to ensure the individual person's liberty regardless of one's socioeconomic status. Berlin's argument asserts that freedom is very essence of being human, and at the same time he supports the well-being of individual persons. He opposes a state, community or religious body's interfering with an individual persons' freedom, but he does not oppose a certain degree of positive liberty, if it helps the well-being of a person.

3.3 Balancing of Positive and Negative Liberty

A democratic nation like India needs to have well-balanced, positive and negative liberty. Negative liberty alone cannot solve the various social and political issues the nation faces. An individual "is free to act taking everything into account, including interference or help by others, as well as one's own powers and limitations" (Sen, 2004, p. 509). Individuals should be treated with human dignity, but in such a way that they attain their telos, so the nation as a whole can move towards a better future.

A pluralistic society or institution helps promote human dignity by letting individuals develop their capacities, which requires a liberal democratic environment. Such a society has elements by which individuals use their rationality in every move they make in their lifetime. It is important that individuals have the freedom to express their rights through reasoning.

The most important thing about a liberal democratic society is the balance between positive and negative liberty. Cherniss, in referring to Berlin's notion of negative liberty, concurs that negative liberty requires the absence of obstacles whereas positive liberty is expressed in the form of one's own decision to attain one's end (Cherniss, 2013, p. 189). As Berlin states:

The essence of liberty has always lain in the ability to choose because you wish to choose uncoerced, unbullied, not swallowed up in some vast system:
and in the right to resist, to be unpopular, to stand up for your convictions merely because they are your convictions. That is true freedom, and without it there is neither freedom of any kind, or the illusion of it. (cited in Cherniss, 2013 p. 189)

While this passage may describe negative liberty, it also involves positive liberty’s sense of freedom to choose for oneself, not just absence of barriers. The basic notion of liberty was conceived as an ability to choose between possible alternatives. Our ‘basic liberty’ is recognized and promoted when individuals have freedom to live like human beings.

Promoting human liberty and human telos are the core elements of democracy, which cannot be attained through Berlin’s negative liberty only. However, as mentioned before, the State cannot take a totally neutral stance, but should adopt procedures and means to preserve not only human autonomy, but also create options for the pursuit of multiple goals in a prudent manner. The role of the state-person is crucial in maintaining the balance between negative and positive liberty; not an easy task. The results of every political decision will have far-reaching consequences in a society. Berlin states “It is semi-instinctive knowledge of these lower depths, knowledge of the intricate connections between the upper surface and other, remoter layers of social and individual life, which is an indispensable ingredient of good political judgment” (1996b, p. 51). Looking at the Indian context, the elected representatives in a democracy like India’s are committed to safeguarding individual liberties, equality and human rights, enforced by the constitution to provide adequate response when threats to such norms arise.

One’s personal inability to attain a goal cannot be construed as a lack of political freedom. Berlin makes the following observation:

It is only because I believe my ability to get a given thing is due to the fact that other human beings have made arrangements whereby I am and others are prevented from having enough money with which to pay for it that I think myself a victim of coercion or slavery. If in addition I believe that I am kept in want by a particular arrangement which I consider unjust or unfair, I speak of economic slavery or oppression. (2002, p. 170)
A person's freedom includes individual liberties as well as freedom from discrimination, inequality, domination or abusive political power, plus the ability to reason about one's own interest. In a democratic society, freedom promotes every individual's equality and social justice before the law; through economic and socio-cultural equality, it promotes equal opportunities for all, regardless of their caste, race or background. Most importantly, democracy aims to provide opportunities to give hope to victims of injustice and inequality. Because people in a state need freedom to pursue their self-interests, it should be the primary responsibility of the state to design its ruling structure to give such freedom to every citizen. For example, in some situations “there are persistent denials of basic freedom to seek wage employment away from one’s traditional bosses” (Sen, 1999, p. 113). In such cases, only in a liberal democratic state can people exercise their freedom against such domination.

3.4 Tension between Negative and Positive Liberty

Clearly, we need to understand that one value is not better than all the others. Negative freedom is essential and a certain minimum amount of personal freedom must not be infringed. Although Berlin was against moral monism, there is a certain underlying core of principles which is considered universal. Galston sets out to elucidate this aspect of Berlin’s theory. He says at various points Berlin invoked the language of human dignity, inviolable rights, minimal freedoms that we must not trade off for other goods. He insisted upon a common human horizon of basic categories in terms of which we understand human experience and the human species (2009, p. 85). In Berlin’s own words,

Those who are out of touch with the external world are described as abnormal and in extreme cases insane. And so also and this is the point – are those who wander too far from the common public world of values... acceptance of common values (at any rate irreducible minimum of them) enters into the very conception of a normal human being. (2002, p. 24)
This is a significant stance.

In the area of positive liberty, problems arise when ‘self-realization’ is defined so that it is forcibly imposed upon those who are convinced that there is one unitary goal and that true freedom is attained only when the collective effort of the nation is dedicated toward its attainment. When such a view is taken by a state, the government would deny the real needs of the individuals and societies, acting instead like a guardian who “oppress, torture them in the name and behalf of their real selves, in the secure knowledge that whatever is the true goal … must be identical with freedom. The free choice is a true, albeit submerged inarticulate self” (2002, p. 200).

Berlin realized that every good has conflicts, not only with other goods, but also among themselves. Positive liberty means “I wish to be the instrument of my own, not of other men’s act of will” (2002, p. 211). It is the freedom “to”, whereas by negative liberty, an individual can act unobstructed by others, without deliberate obstacles (2002, p. 169). It is the freedom “from.” The two concepts of liberty have to be balanced, otherwise a person’s life can become chaotic because everyone has to be the master of their own life, provided that they have an opportunity to function independently. Some rulers and religious leaders suggest that individuals’ negative liberty should be restricted in order to attain perfection. This kind of interference can harm individuals’ freedom. In the religious sense, positive liberty is deeply connected with individuals’ self-perfection or self-realization. In order to attain one’s freedom, a person has to give up negative liberty and follow what is directed by one’s religious leaders. The individual self is divided into a higher self and a lower self. The higher self operates with reason, whereas the lower self is based upon unbridled passions. Communist leaders and religious leaders both use this metaphor to coax individuals to give up their negative liberty for the sake of the common good. The fundamentalists use the notion of positive liberty by convincing individuals that they can be truly free by sacrificing their
negative liberty. Also, these leaders claim that a perfect society can be attained only by restricting the positive liberty of people. According to Berlin, “Governments should be modest with regard to the positive goal they want to impose on their citizens and should always guarantee a certain area of non-interference” (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 25). He strongly suggests that a state must not control the liberty of its individuals. Not providing liberty can lead the citizens to difficulties in pursuing their ends. Liberty cannot be sacrificed for other values. Liberty is liberty; it is not equality. It is not justice or freedom of speech. It entails the depth of human nature. Denying liberty to an individual can mean not recognizing the individual as a human being. A state should have good reason for limiting negative liberty for the sake of some common good such as education, public security or public health. Berlin also speaks of “a balance between the two, about which no clear principle can be enunciated” (Jahanbegloo, 1992, p. 41). It is a shrewd statesperson who can secure a balance by sound political judgment. Speaking of the practical wisdom of statesperson to ably deal with conflicts that arise in various situations, Berlin asserts:

Their merit is that they grasp the unique combination of characteristics that constitute this particular situation – this and no other. What they are said to be able to do is to understand the character of a particular movement, of a particular individual, of a unique state of affairs, of a unique atmosphere, of some particular combination of economic, political, personal factors: and we do not readily suppose that this capacity can literally be taught. (1996b, p. 45)

Each situation presents its own difficulties, which must be resolved according to context.

3.5 Problems with Berlin’s Concept of Liberty

Charles Taylor comments on the notions of negative and positive freedom by saying that they are not too far apart in their connotations. He characterizes the notion of positive freedom as an ‘exercise concept’ since it exerts control over man’s life. Negative freedom is an ‘opportunity concept,’ being free to choose whatever is available to the individual, whether or not one opts for these choices. Exercise freedom, as he explains, requires that one
discriminate among motivations. Obstacles to freedom turn out to be both external and internal. The capacities for freedom must therefore involve self-understanding and moral discrimination. Thus, exercise freedom implies that one does not go against basic self-realization. Taylor’s logical conclusion is that freedom recognizes a situation’s more important purposes while being free of external barriers. Freedom’s first condition requires one to have achieved self-understanding. When self-understanding is necessary to be fully free, one can no longer consider freedom as just an opportunity concept (Taylor, 1979, pp. 101-109). This analysis marks the move from a purely negative freedom to that of positive freedom itself with considerable ease. An important distinction made by Berlin is that of liberty and the conditions which make it worth having, though none of them enter into a definition of freedom itself. This implies that the need to promote justice or equality is not really directed to the enhancement of liberty, but to the conditions that make it valuable. Berlin claims “still, liberty is one thing and the conditions for it another...useless freedoms should be made usable but they are not identical with the conditions indispensable for their utility” (2002, p. 46). For instance, if a man is too poor or too ignorant or too feeble to make use of his legal rights, the liberty that these rights confer upon him is not thereby annihilated (Johari, 2012, p. 231). Berlin is cognizant of the fact that to keep a whole class or a whole people in poverty and ignorance, or to shut them out from the benefits accumulated by a dominant class, is to render their liberty hollow (2002, p. 69). This would clearly deprive them of the conditions for liberty.

Concerning political liberty, the factors of importance are the possibilities open to individuals and how easy or difficult each of them is to actualize. The latter factor appears to introduce the conditions of liberty (Macperson, 1973, p. 104). A key statement of Berlin is:

The fundamental sense of freedom is freedom from chains, from imprisonment, from enslavement of others. The rest is extension of this sense or else metaphor...Freedom at least in the political sense is co-terminous with the absence of bullying or domination. (1996, p. lvi)
MacPherson contends:

It is a long step from the absence of bullying or domination or chains or enslavement, to the number of possibilities open and the ease of actualizing them. It is a step which carries negative liberty much of the way towards positive liberty. (1973, p. 104)

The re-reading of Berlin’s political philosophy, the various connotations and implication of the concepts of liberty, goes a long way towards understanding its varying roles, inner links and the incommensurability of values.

3.6 Incommensurability of Values and Existence of Conflicts

‘Incommensurability’ means that not all goods or values can be combined harmoniously, leading to conflict between values having equal validity. Berlin states metaphorically that human beings cannot be squeezed into “cut-and-dried formulas” (2002, p. 317) or “into the neat uniforms demanded by dogmatically believed-in schemes” (1997, p. 16) because human ends are many. Human lives cannot be understood through universal monist systems of values and norms. Rather, humans are molded by their cultural practices, which are very diverse from one another. Each culture has its own gravity based upon a philosophy for understanding the universe. So cultures should be judged by their own values.

In the Indian context, cultural pluralism is evident and a diversity of value systems is present. The democratic system favors secularism and supports pluralism. The many religious traditions follow a methodical understanding of each other’s key doctrine termed purva paksha, which widens one’s perspective. Purva paksha demands that one comprehends another’s position in the right manner before entering into a dialogue. Thus this concept recognizes the existence of differences among religious systems and their customs, rites and traditions. The ideal is to inculcate mutual respect for different dharmic schools. But to take a balanced view of tolerance and mutual harmony among dharmic schools is not feasible since
there are religious tensions of various kinds. In spite of India’s being a secular nation, religious bigotry and fundamentalism persist. Berlin’s suggestion to address clashes of values by utilizing Vico and Herder’s notion of imaginative insight or fantasia to resolve conflicts can be applied to India’s conflicts in a fruitful manner.

The long-standing controversy about Isaiah Berlin’s political philosophy lies in the conflict between upholding negative liberty and the need to protect it against the threats of positive liberty and policies of political regimes. While value pluralism may be a fact, an incommensurability of values is also present. One cannot afford to displace one value for another. When political theories attempt this exercise, an anomaly occurs. Taking one such instance, Berlin states that, for many centuries, human beings have pursued liberty and equality has their primary ends, “but liberty for wolves is death to the lambs, total liberty of the powerful, the gifted, is not compatible with the rights to the decent existence of the weak, the less gifted” (1997, p. 10). Throughout his work, the tension between negative and positive liberty is highlighted, often showcasing historical evidence that proves that positive liberty imposed by a political authority has had drastic consequences. Yet political theorists need to take cognizance of this danger and attempt to resolve the conflict, given that the values of various cultures are different and not necessarily compatible. However, Berlin does not cater to the idea of cultural relativism. He asserts:

Members of one culture can, by the force of imaginative insight, understand the values, the ideals, the forms of life of another culture or society, even those remote in time or space. They may find these values unacceptable but if they open their minds sufficiently they may grasp how one might be a full human being with whom one could communicate and in the same time live in the light of values widely different from one’s own, but which nevertheless one can see to be values, ends of life, by the realization of which men could be fulfilled. (1997, p. 9)

This suggests that people find paths to a workable proposition to retain value pluralism and end conflict, if only as a temporary measure. One can admire other’s viewpoints or criticize them even as one attempts to understand them. Berlin makes it clear that intercommunication
between cultures in various times and places is possible only because what makes people human is what is common to them. While forms of life, moral ends and purposes of individuals may differ, the common element is that they fall within the human sphere (1997, pp. 9-10). Precisely at this point, it is evident that in practice, individuals must be granted the option to follow their chosen path. A government should be equipped to keep a balance, not create divisions among core values.

While it is not possible to remove the clash among values that are inherently different in nature, solutions to the survival of key values is possible. One of the ways towards this goal is in Berlin’s appraisal of the values of equality and liberty, which he perceives as incompatible. He states:

Equality may demand the restraint of the liberty of those who wish to dominate; liberty without some modicum of which there is no choice and therefore no possibility of remaining human as we understand the word may have to be curtailed in order to make room for social welfare, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless, to leave room for the liberty of others, to allow justice or fairness to be exercised. (1997, p. 11)

Yet these are but temporary measures which would introduce new needs and demands from many. In his wisdom, a true statesman can perceive and prioritize an immediate solution based upon each situation. The fact is that values are objective and carry equal weight, so a person cannot dismiss one of the other as inessential. The fact is that one needs to choose between values. In conclusion, Berlin admits “Of course, political or social collisions will take place the mere conflict of positive values makes this unavoidable. Yet, they can, I believe, be minimized by promoting and preserving an uneasy equilibrium, which is constantly threatened and in constant need of repair...” (1997, p. 16). The directives of Berlin for maintaining multicultural values are clear.

Claims can be balanced, compromises can be reached: in concrete situations not every claim is of equal force – so much liberty and so much equality; so much for sharp moral condemnation, and so much for understanding a given human situation; so much for the full force of the law, and so much for the prerogative of mercy; for feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, healing the
sick, sheltering the homeless. Priorities, never final and absolute, must be established. (1997, p. 14)

The priorities that need to be established rest with the measures, governmental directives and in India, with the democratic ideals of liberalism and secularism. Berlin’s views help to clarify that the basic essentials of time, place and circumstances prioritize values to suit the occasion. Secondly, Berlin emphasizes that no utopian end of perfect harmony is possible nor even desirable in a pluralistic society. Berlin is critical of a perfect utopian society in the state. He does not think that it is possible for all human beings to have an identical end at all times and everywhere. “The assumption on which this is based is that men have a certain fixed, unaltering nature, certain universal, common, immutable goals. Once these goals are realized, human nature is wholly fulfilled” (Berlin, 1990a, p. 20). These kinds of thinking, he says, can lead human beings astray.

Berlin considers certain views of philosophers as the enemies of human liberty, because they advocate giving up one’s negative freedom in order to attain the common good. One of these is Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the eighteenth century philosopher. In his *The Social Contract* he suggests that human beings must surrender or be forced to give up one’s negative liberty for the sake of the common good. This means an individual’s liberty rests in the hands of some authority, which forces a person to be controlled by someone else.

For if the essence of men is that they are autonomous beings - authors of values, of ends in themselves, the ultimate authority of which consists precisely in the fact that they are willed freely - then nothing is worse than to treat them as if they were not autonomous, but natural objects, played on by causal influences, creatures at the mercy of external stimuli, whose choices can be manipulated by their rulers, whether by threats of force or offers of rewards. (Berlin, 2002, p.183)

Berlin strongly rejects the idea that liberty must be controlled by someone else. This kind of interference does not help the individual to attain his/her true freedom.
3.7 Value Pluralism and Liberalism Conflicts

Human values are incompatible with each other, so people must make choices without impediments to reach their goals. In explaining Berlin’s concept of political liberty, one important fact that needs to be stressed is that value pluralism and liberalism have significant mutual support. Attempts by many interpreters of Berlin’s thought in this context agree upon the connection between these concepts. In setting out these viewpoints, the aim is to clarify the key components of his doctrine.

Berlin’s basic political philosophy is directed to value pluralism, by which he means the diversity of values and styles of life held by men as ideals to be followed. Pluralism can apply to entire cultures, traditions, group norms and value systems. It acknowledges the plurality of values from which any individual chooses. Given this diversity of values, Berlin recognizes that many goods have potential rivalry. It is difficult to find a solution to resolve such conflicts by establishing a universal standard. Each of the values may contain pluralistic elements in itself as well. According to Gray, the pluralism of Berlin rejects the notion of a perfect society or perfect human life. His political structure does not admit of a hierarchical order such that dilemmas can be solved by application of such principles (1996, pp. 70-71).

Yet, as Gray contends concerning pluralism:

Though the forms of human life which individuals invent for themselves are immensely diverse, they are not in Berlin’s account of them, for that reason, inaccessible or incommunicable to one another. On the contrary, these practices are according to Berlin, mutually intelligible to a high degree. (1996, p. 72)

Kelly endorses this viewpoint of Berlin by stating:

By virtue of a shared humanity, values are both ‘objective’ and subject to the claims of mutual understanding or intelligibility. The ‘fact’ of pluralism relates to the ability to recognize that although people will often pursue individually irreconcilable values, if they are at least part of the spectrum of values shared by humans qua humans, then the possibility of understanding, if not agreement, is always present. (2002, p. 40)
Berlin is against any form of monism or relativism in his theory. Neither is he a subjectivist in his view, but subscribes to objective pluralism. In his political framework, a natural outcome of pluralism is the theory of liberalism.

This analysis will lead to a better understanding of liberal democracy, which seeks to preserve diverse values without unduly corroding one’s negative freedom. When a person faces a choice between freedom and any other value like equality, it is not to be construed as a distinction between superior and inferior values. Berlin asserted:

Positive and negative freedoms may collide; the freedom or the individual or the group may not be fully compatible with a full degree of participation in common life, with its demands for co-operation, solidarity and fraternity. But beyond all these there is an acuter issue, the permanent need to satisfy the claims of other, no less ultimate values; justice, happiness, love, the realization of capacities to create new things and experiences and ideas; the discovery of truth. (2002, p. 48)

In the above excerpt, the merits of multiple values are recognized. While freedom is compared with other values so that a preference for one of them will be at the cost of liberty, this need not always be so. Although values such as liberty and equality are different, they need not necessarily conflict. An interesting turning point in Berlin’s thought was Crowder’s view which held that Berlin’s theory of pluralism implied and set the basis for liberalism. Crowder stated, “On the pluralist view, one way of life cannot be wholly incommensurable, because at least some values are universal. All forms of life must be overlap to that extent” (2008, pp. 155-156). Pluralism demands that a political system embrace a diversity of values. What such diversity implies would not be political regimes or ways of life, but goods or values themselves. As Crowder elaborates:

Rather than valuing or promoting a diversity of regimes or cultures without regard to their content, value pluralists should value and promote a diversity of regimes and cultures that are themselves internally diverse, that is, that exhibit internally a diversity of goods and (secondarily) ways of life. (2008, p. 158)
He contended that the “value of diversity” connects pluralism to liberalism. The notion of various, incommensurable goods implies a commitment to promote as many of them as possible, which can be achieved by pluralism. Regarding the connection of pluralism to liberalism, Myers also adopted the stand that instead of attempting to solve the conflict between these two concepts, one might accept the gap between them as the structure of free political life (2010, p. 625). Such a condition is part of a liberal democratic model. A balance between pluralism and liberalism needs to be considered in the policies of the state.

Liberalism is a theory whereby enough options are provided by a government for individuals to follow the ideals of their choice, necessarily involving different ways of life and value systems. It thus avoids any form of oppression or repressionist policies, creating room for human diversity. Berlin’s notion of liberalism is different from utilitarian or merely pragmatic considerations. Since there are no universal standards to decide conclusively between human dilemmas, the question of maintaining liberal values in a pluralist society occupied Berlin’s attention. He believed that a liberal society is one form of societal and political framework to which one should commit. As Gray points out, pluralistic societies are prone to internal conflicts, so a way of tolerance is commendable. He states,

Even if the critics of enlightenment are right, even if there is an unresolvable conflict of competing values; even if there is no clear answer to how a given dilemma should be resolved; still says Berlin, tolerance and reason can help to maintain the equilibrium which is, as he put it, the ‘first requirement of a decent society’ (2009, p. 163).

As Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet elaborates on Berlin’s views, “Instead of seeking perfection, governments must try simply to be decent. Decent governments should not impose a specific vision of the good on their citizens but allow a certain area of discretion in which personal choice can be made” (2006, p.175). Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet further states,

Berlin remains quite positive about the ability of humans to resolve value conflicts. With this optimism, Berlin safeguards one of the most important pre-requisites of a liberal, democratic and open society. If the world is truly occupied by purely egocentric beings who are unable to make compromises
that transcend individual interests, strict authoritarianism for preventing war of all against all is justified. (2006, p. 38)

Berlin upholds an inherent human potential to resolve conflicts—the ability to understand other’s viewpoints and make compromises that rise above individual interests, which together form a foundation for a liberal society. Berlin is true to a liberal pluralism, the idea that different cultures, tradition, creeds and ways of life can nevertheless co-exist. This was his contribution to the political arena, a defense of human dignity, liberty and diversity. As a pluralist, he appreciated multicultural societies that accept the beliefs and practices of a group as values which regulate their collective lives.

Gerald C. MacCallum took up the same issue in a different light. He gave an example of a Mr. Smith, who is made free by “restraining” him, but with a supposition in place. Smith is being restrained only in the ordinary sense of the term; actually, he is not being restrained at all. He is being helped to do what he would want to do if he were reasonable (moral, prudent, and so on). Because of the constraint, a genuine constraint that was placed on him (for example, ignorance, passion, intrusion of others) is removed, and thereby, he is free to do what he wishes to do (1967, p. 331). The so-called constraint grants freedom to the individual rather than obstructing him in his goal. In MacCullum’s own words, two main lines are found here: “(a) that the activities of being restrained are so unimportant or minor that they are not worth counting (b) that the activities are such that no one could ever want to engage in them” (1967, p. 331). In re-reading Berlin’s political philosophy, the various connotations and implications of the concept of liberty goes a long way to understanding its varying roles and inner links. Berlin’s assertion about diverse value systems is worth noting,

If I am a man or woman with sufficient imagination (and this I do need) I can enter into a value system which is not my own, but which is nevertheless something I can conceive of men pursuing, while remaining human, while remaining creatures with whom I can communicate, with whom I can have some common values—for all human beings must have some common values or cease to be human, and also some different values or they cease to differ, as in fact they do. (2013a, p. 14)
The challenge posed in Berlin’s thought is to explore the ways in which value pluralism can be linked to liberalism, being cognizant of the need for negative liberty. The rights of an individual may have to be enlarged from age to age, and the periphery of freedom will have to accommodate such options to ensure that negative liberty is not endangered. Liberalism ensures an individual’s negative liberty and offers the opportunity to realize one’s potential (Ball, 2015). The rightful place of negative liberty in a democratic model cannot be exaggerated, so the question to consider is whether negative liberty alone is conducive to democratic growth. The mere absence of external obstacles can have a lacuna-like effect, which will be further explored in the discussion of Indian democracy, which caters to individual freedom and the ideals of pluralism to protect the diversity and multiculturalism which mark Indian society.

To sum up Berlin’s value pluralism’s connection to liberalism, Berlin clearly asserts the connection between them as possible. Human beings follow diverse ends which often conflict, so these cannot be united in one single concept of a human good. Berlin upholds pluralism as a core principle and does not adhere to monism. Crowder states “Pluralism is the antidote he prescribes for the moral monism that forms the deepest foundation of twentieth century totalitarianism” (2008, p.127). Moral monism attempts to provide the ultimate answer by means of a single system of values, which can well lead to political authoritarianism. Berlin, in denying such a single formula, points to the conflicts in moral experience that defy any one universal solution. Crowder notes that one often experiences regret for a lost value in making a choice. In the monist view, such losses would be only apparent, not real, as the choice leads to commensurable gain. From the pluralist perspective, these losses are real because one’s fundamental values are plural, potentially conflicting each ‘equally ultimate’ (2008, pp.131-132). The value pluralism of Berlin has distinctive features as evinced in his writings. The foremost among these are a diversity in values and inevitable conflict among
goods. The values which individuals, societies and cultures uphold are many, adding to the immense diversity of humankind both in personal and social life. Berlin states:

There is a world of objective values. By this I mean those ends that men pursue for their own sakes, to which other things are means. I am not blind to what the Greeks valued-their values may not be mine, but I can grasp what it would be like to live by their light, I can admire and respect them, and even imagine myself as pursuing them, although I do not- and do not wish to, and perhaps could not if I wished. Forms of life differ. (Berlin, 1997, p. 11)

Being a pluralist, he points out that goods are not commensurable, observing:

Not all the supreme values pursued by mankind now and in the past were necessarily compatible with one another. It undermined my earlier assumption based on the *philosophia perennis*, that there could be no conflict between true ends, true answers to the central problems of life. (Berlin, 1997 p.7)

Yet he allows for the fact that “Ends, moral principles are many. But not infinitely many, they must be within the human horizon” (Berlin, 1997, p. 10). The range may be vast, but plurality has its finitude according to ‘limits of humanity,’ suggesting a common moral horizon. It also suggests that at least some goods share a universal feature, and Berlin outlines the importance of this perception in stating unequivocally:

Few today would wish to defend slavery or ritual murder or Nazi gas chambers or the torture of human beings for the sake of pleasure or profit or even political good or the duty of children to denounce, their parents which the French and Russian revolutions demanded, or mindless killing. There is no justification for compromise on this. (Berlin, 2009, p. 18)

At least some goods are valued by all human beings. Berlin thus separates pluralism from relativism.

In keeping with the thesis of value pluralism, there arises another feature of Berlin’s doctrine. He denies that there can be a utopian vision of moral and political perfection. It can be termed anti-utopianism. He is emphatic in his denial of a perfect society without conflict, remarking “The notion of a perfect, whole, an ultimate solution, in which all goods co-exist, seems to be to me, to be not merely unattainable--that is a truism--but conceptually incoherent...” (Berlin, 1997, p. 11).
Value pluralism thus reveals a diversity of values in the lives of individual humans as well as in social life. Each of these values has its own importance and significance. Due to the incompatibility among value systems, there are conflicts. These cannot be combined to form one harmonious hierarchy of values, or to rank different values in some order. Thus in many stages of one's life, choices have to be made. To protect a diversity of values, political judgment has to play a role.

3.8 Political Judgment for Pluralism

Berlin's political theory has made significant contributions to demarcating the notion of liberty and its application in a political context. The role of the statesman becomes one of crucial importance. A statesman cannot learn political science as merely a system of laws which provide theoretical knowledge to solve issues of political nature. As Berlin emphatically asserts,

In the realm of political action, laws are far and few indeed, skills are everything. What makes statesmen, like drivers of cars successful is that they do not think in general terms, that is, they do not primarily ask themselves in what respect a given situation is like or unlike other situations in the long course of human history. (1996b, p. 45)

His point is that statesmen, to be successful, should be able to assess and understand the combination of economic, political and social factors and act upon them. This would require perceptive judgment, not theoretical knowledge only. Berlin credits Bismarck, Talleyrand and Franklin Roosevelt as possessing this capacity. Those who lack it would be incompetent, and Berlin signals out statesmen like Joseph II of Austria, Frederick the Great and Emperor Catherine of Russia as examples of rulers who failed to correctly assess their respective political situations (Berlin, 1996b, pp. 47-48).

Scientific procedure is of no help in this arena. Scientific data does indeed furnish valuable information for social organization and social problems, but cannot be utilized as a
model for political science and its myriad issues (1996b, pp. 47-48). Ultimately the practice of politics is more of a skill than theoretical knowledge. Ferrell emphasizes:

As with history, the realm of politics demands capacities which lend themselves to an intuitive grasp of context and situation, particularity and differentiation; that is the art of politics also demands a ‘sense of reality’ which revolves around an ability to note and comprehend what is novel and unique, individual and distinct. In short, Politics requires a grasp of historical context. (2009, p. 306)

This is an important observation insofar as it recognizes the diversity of every societal group, its ways and specific cultural forms. Value pluralism needs to be addressed by political means so as to protect diversity of any society, and to give credence to negative liberty in keeping doors, options and opportunities open, whether the individual chooses them or not.

Political structures need to promote individual liberty to the extent possible. Since freedom exposes both external and internal aspects, to secure the latter, the policies of government have to be introduced without adverse consequences to the former. The former relates to negative liberty and the latter to positive freedom, and in attempting to secure a balance between each of these, individual freedom becomes limited. But how far does this balance hold, and what are the limits of government interference?

Can the ideal of Indian democracy be content with providing options and opportunities for negative freedom by the constitutional safeguards, bills of rights and civil liberties enshrined in the constitution? In the context of multiculturalism and in view of a pluralistic society, governmental policies must protect diverse secular and cultural traditions. Social progress and social dynamics introduce new changes within value systems and, by exposing these factors, the government allows its citizens further freedom of choice. While many opportunities may be available, freedom also depends upon whether an individual is able to follow a particular opportunity. While a government can present various options which would not have been available otherwise, the individual’s use of freedom is still questionable. Miller offered a solution to such constraints of the internal kind. He stated:
How can one promote the inner freedom, the capacity to make genuine choices? One way is to expose people to a wide range of alternatives, so that they are less likely to take for granted, one set of beliefs or one way of life to be the right one. So a government that wanted to promote freedom to choose could do so by encouraging social diversity, by exposing people to new ways of living, new forms of culture and so on. (2003, p. 72)

The ideal of a government is to frame policies which in fact increase freedom by offering multiple options.

In the Indian context, many issues maintain pluralism by political measures. Beetham remarks, “India provides an outstanding example of a country internally divided by religion, caste, language and region which has nevertheless maintained a democratic government for over fifty years” (2006, p. 89). A specific reason he cites for this division rests with the citizens themselves: “People are capable of developing multi-level loyalties to religion, region, ethnic or linguistic community, as well as the nation as a whole. It is possible to sustain different entities without treating anyone as exclusive of others” (Beetham, 2006, p. 90). As Berlin observes, democratic liberal governments can secure the civil liberties of its people more than regimes that are ruled by individuals who have a selfish motive (2002, p. 177). He noted that the connection between democracy and individual liberty is more tenuous than it seemed to many advocates of both (2002, p. 178). Human rights are a sequel to individual freedom, and both are part of democratic systems. No government can infringe upon human rights as defined by constitutional policies. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights endorsed by the United Nations in 1948 specifies rights that directly protect liberty, such as the right to freedom of movement, freedom of worship, the right to work, the right to an adequate standard of living, right to education among others. Democracy raises questions about the use of resources to promote freedom and individual rights. An appeal is also made to the values of pluralism, equality, fairness, common good and so on (Miller, 2003, p.73). By clarifying the many dimensions of freedom, the ideals of democracy will have to be carefully applied to ensure they conform to what is envisioned.
3.9 Conclusion

Even though some scholars have argued that Berlin’s notion of value pluralism and its connection to liberalism is not logical, one can still find that these two notions have some harmonious connection because both of them can flourish through mutual support. The main focus of Berlin’s argument is always on the human as a free being whose ends are many. His opinions have brought about a greater awareness of individual persons’ worth, dignity and value. His political theory illustrates a strong commitment for individual persons’ liberty because it is deeply rooted in value pluralism. His theory is attractive because it is based upon practical situations which have a direct impact on any society struggling to overcome issues related to pluralism and liberalism. Every person faces incommensurability of values in daily life so he/she must make a right choice. Values are human-made and individuals should have freedom to make choices. Individual persons should not be oppressed in the name of religion, culture, or some political view. Ultimately, choices should rest upon the freedom of human beings, not ideologies, cultural values, religious ideals which suppress human dignity and individuality. Berlin’s notion of value pluralism and his views about liberty have a direct implication for any society which aims at creating a better place for human beings.
CHAPTER 4
BERLIN’S VALUE PLURALISM AND DHARMA IN THE TRADITIONAL INDIAN CONTEXT

India is known for its ancient civilization and the richness of plurality in its cultures, languages, customs and religions. The nature of this plurality is expressed through various cultural and religious practices and is reflected in idea of dharma. The notion of dharma holds a great importance in Indian philosophy and cultural practices. The interesting aspect of dharma is that it is flexible in nature and embraces plurality in human nature. The researcher finds that dharma has many similarities to Berlin’s value pluralism. Both of these notions demonstrate that how a respect for pluralism can be sustained in the face of sovereignty and democracy. The study of Berlin’s value pluralism revisits the notion of dharma and balances India’s pluralistic tradition with the modern Western political frameworks. The most essential aspect of dharma and value pluralism is to develop their own approach to democracy in the face of globalization, and to resist the more destructive forces of nationalism. Both notions recognize the very essence of being human, which deeply involves plurality and freedom.

The Indian subcontinent was under many rulers before it was united by colonial rule. Even today the Indian subcontinent is heavily influenced by the idea of dharma. These kinds of practice keeps India deeply connected to the practices of its early civilization, though it needs to evaluate some practices that originated in the name of religion. India has become a successful liberal secular democratic nation after gaining its independence from the colonial rulers. This new independence has helped the nation to be unified despite various cultures, languages, customs, religions and territories, which is a blessing. However, this seems to be a blessing in disguise since it also entails immense pressure to keep this unity intact. The fact is, it is a constant threat to some religious fundamentalists that India is a pluralistic nation
open to many political ideas concerning sovereignty. Retaining its pluralistic heritage is a priority for the unity of the nation as well as other major issues like the caste system, which originates from ancient orthodox religious practices. The castes originated from myths and the division of labor, but it was an unethical practice which denies the right of individuals to be fully human. These two issues clearly oppose Berlin’s notion of value pluralism because his notion recognizes plurality among humans so that no one is dehumanized because of one’s occupation or social position. To understand the pluralistic nature of India and current political issues, one needs to look at the history of its early civilization and its interpretations through dharma.

4.1 Significance of Dharma

Ancient Indian tradition has categorized four goals necessary for anyone to lead a meaningful life. These four goals are dharma, artha, kama and moksha. Among these four goals, dharma is normative in nature, dealing with various sets of rules. These rules can be divided into two categories. The first set of rules are universal, applicable to all ages and occupations. The second set of rules is based upon one’s particular social situation (Perrett, 2001, p. xiv). Dharma is not like civil laws meant to be followed, but rather one should personally aim to integrate them into one’s life and develop an ability to establish dharma as a social order. Such ability may help an individual to attain one’s end as a human being (Koller, 172, p.131). Dharma’s deeper aim is ethical perfection in one’s life, which could help one to attain ultimate knowledge (Radhakrishnan, 1948, p. 52). Artha means wealth, which determines an individual’s material life. Kama means the aesthetic fulfillment of a person’s life. Moksha means liberation, a process by which an individual becomes one with the Ultimate Being, or realizes oneself in the union of reality. One cannot attain this oneness or fullness without fulfilling proper dharma.
The concept of *dharma* has seen a great intellectual struggle from the post-vedic to early classical period of ancient India. During this period, the religions of Buddhism, Jainism, Ajivika and various *bhakti* (devotional) traditions flourished even though they did not recognize the orthodoxy of the *Vedas*. Besides these religious movements, *dharma* literature found a significant growth under the brahmanic scholasticism (Bowles, 2007, p. 81). The concept of *dharma* is as old as the Rgveda and has had a huge impact on all Indian traditions. It is difficult to find a clear meaning of *dharma* in Vedic literature, but *dharmasutras* explain the meaning of dharma in relation to some situations, and also how the concept of *dharma* was used in *Vedic* literature. To understand the concept of *dharma*, one needs to learn the Veda; in fact, an important purpose of studying the Veda is to learn about *dharma*.

*Dharmasutras* has caused a significant shift in the concept of *dharma*, moving it from the Brahmanic thought to “its philosophical ‘purview’” (Bowles, 2007, p. 83).

### 4.1.1 Meaning of Dharma

*Dharma* is a complex concept, hence difficult to define, but the term in the Indian context has numerous connotations. The key principle of *dharma* is concerned with how one should lead a meaningful life. In the Indian context, the term refers to one’s moral norms and duties in the broad sense. It is a combination of ethics and religion, the very core of morality. It is not something fixed like state laws. The concepts of *dharma* are principles of moral values connected to a mean. The word ‘*dharma,*’ derived from the Sanskrit root ‘dhr,’ ‘to hold that which holds together,’ is often translated as righteousness. The meaning of *dharma* could be further elaborated as ‘to sustain’, ‘to maintain’ and ‘to support.’ “Thus duties, obligations and justice – in general, rules of conduct and guides to action come under *dharma*, since they are essential to the protection and perpetuation of the individual and society” (Puligandla, 1997, p. 8).
The culture of Indian society encourages the pursuit of *dharma* as an ethical framework which involves right action, right conduct, virtue, and moral law. "*Dharma* is also equated with truth (*satya*), therefore it is said that when one speaks the truth one speaks *dharma*, and vice versa" (Bowles, 2007, p.95). Due to all these reasons, *dharma* should be the essential focus of a human's life. Radhakrishnan states, "*dharma* in a wide sense is used to connote all the means for the achievement of the different ends of life" (1960, p. 154). It helps individuals arise from the worldly issues and understand the highest meanings. Only through *dharma* can one progressively attain the true goal of human existence, and it is the unifying force of human and nature.

The historical evidence shows that ancient Indians showed a great reverence to the sun, the moon, water, fire and wind. At times they even worshipped these natural elements, using various mantras from the *Vedas* because they realized the importance of preserving the "cosmic order" (*rta*) which linked the individual and the universe (Srinivasan, 2013). Their unique realization led them to revere obligations about the cosmic order which is known as *rna*. *Rna* is "a connection between the individual mind and its own inner being – an inherent awareness, recognition of a connection, due to what appeared to be an inevitable dependence of the individual upon the vast outside world" (Srinivasan, 2013).

The realization of humans' connection to the cosmic order caused a sense of obligation which brought about the evolution of *dharma*, because the ancient Indians sought various methods and rules to preserve the cosmic order appropriately. Every individual has an obligation to preserve the cosmic order. The nature of these obligations can vary according to the individual's traditions and customs. The preservation of *rta* (cosmic order) and *rna* helps an individual develop the solidarity of society, and they aim at the well-being of all creation. Such an individual is called a *dharmic* person.
4.1.2 Dharma and Social Duties

As Radhakrishnan clarifies, "Though dharma is absolute, it has no absolute and timeless content. The only thing eternal about morality is man's desire for the better" (1947, p. 114). By nature, humans are value seekers and have dharmic (ethical) interests. In the context of Hinduism, social institutions influence and shape the moral feelings and character of people, that is, dharma. As such it includes social norms, statutes, duties, obligations and ethics as well as the essential good character of the individual. For example, the doctrine of selfless action is important for dharma; to do one's duties conscientiously is to follow one's dharma. It comprises various virtues and the right way of living according to a moral code of conduct. However, it is not merely individualistic, but also related to society. Halbfass states,

Dharma is neither a "natural" order immanent in the subsistence of the world nor an "objective" transcendental order and lawfulness. Instead, it is the continuous maintaining of the social and cosmic order and norm which is achieved by the Aryan through the performance of vedic rites and traditional duties. (cited by Bowles, 2007, p. 112)

Dharma encompasses the ethical duties of one's social activities, obligations and sacrifice. The purpose of an ethical life is to have a right relationship and interaction between the individual and society, to seek harmony with fellow beings. Society is the place where all individuals progress together regardless of their different ends. Society evolves over the years so there is always possibility of tension and conflict. Regarding "the social life," Radhakrishnan remarks, "There is perpetual endeavor to raise as high as possible the general level of existence in relation to the given conditions. The Hindu dharma gives us a program of rules and regulations and permits their constant change" (1947, p. 115). The rules of dharma tend to constantly change because they are created by mortal beings. Yet even though dharma is created by mortal beings, it still contains immortal ideas (Radhakrishnan, 1947, p. 115). The content of dharma takes into account the situation surrounding any ethical issue, considering the nature and conditions of society at a given time. Hence dharma is
essential to the acceptance of pluralism because it is not a rigid set of rules but rather the groundwork for reflective morality, tied to ethical ideals and humanitarian concerns.

Texts of Hinduism abound with examples of the way dharma is to be practiced; every ethical dilemma presents a challenge to which a morally right solution must be found, as there is no standard rule. The Gita, the religious text of Hinduism, takes the example of a warrior who refuses to fight in the battlefield as failing to perform his duty. The warrior is much disturbed about the killing of his own family members and friends. Killing his own people can mean that he is not practicing dharma as it is prescribed in the Veda. Acting against dharma can cause aharama. This suggests a deeper interpretation of the battle within one’s inner self to practice dharma for the betterment of oneself, society and humanity. This symbolizes the Gita’s example concerning the decision of the warrior. The war is a situation which causes a moral dilemma. The real conflict and struggle is that which arises in each individual when he is faced with making a decision between right and wrong. The enemies are the many vices that each individual must overcome in order to root out these tendencies. Dharma is relevant to such situations because it is a dynamic concept. The political structure of India serves to maintain the cultures, diversity of groups, creeds and races by secular policies and by providing freedom to various ways of life.

Dharma enables persons to live harmoniously in a society while contributing to their own well-being. Despite its many meanings, dharma has an underlying unity. Malhotra refers to the varieties of dharma which are prevalent, namely ashrama dharma, varna dharma, jati dharma, svabhava dharma, svadharma and sadharana dharma (2013, p. 193). Different types of dharma provide their own criteria for human development. For example, ashrama dharma refers to the four stages of a person’s life; they are like a student seeking knowledge, then the stage of a family member, later the stage of detachment and finally the pursuit of a spiritual end. Varna dharma is concerned with occupation, dispositions, aptitudes, one’s
station in life and forms a type of dharma with many significant implications. Each person may be gifted with certain abilities, talents, and capacities. Hence any occupation forced upon an individual can go against the individual’s preference.

Svadharma refers to one’s duties and obligations. Sadharana dharma relies upon a time-tested, universal doctrine for which no context can be found to apply. Caste-based dharma divides people into four, namely Brahmans (priests and teachers), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaisyas (traders) and Sudras (laborers). Their communal codes often lead to disagreements. Jati dharma refers to family responsibilities. Although there is a distinction between groups, with their own specific duties according to occupation, there is social mobility among this gradation. Although not free from conflict, the division of work was organized in the ancient Indian tradition. Class-based dharma has been abused for the advantages of powerful individuals, including one of the worst: denying the rights of those who are involved in ordinary manual occupations. Denying individuals their rights in the name of class systems means denying them freedom to live as human beings. This notion can drive the nation into a struggle to unify its plurality heritage on the basis of equality. David Émile Durkheim has a unique understanding about the classifications within a society. His views are very appealing and might help to understand classes system in a different light. He offers a unique explanation of class divisions through socio-psychological and philosophical backgrounds.

4.1.3 Dharma and Durkheim

Durkheim’s notion of organic solidarity and the functional interdependence of occupations is worth considering. Among other things, freedom is important to Durkheim’s concept of a good society. Durkheim’s vision of organic solidarity says that everyone should be treated equally regardless of their various occupations in society. For Durkheim “social solidarity in modern societies emerges from the functional interdependence of individuals’
differentiated roles; this modern form of social solidarity he calls organic solidarity” (Orru, 1998). The researcher endorses Durkheim’s understanding of ‘organic solidarity’ because it recognizes the worth of individual persons. The advance of civilization has created many social inequalities, wherein individuals judge themselves through comparisons with others’ material well-being. In India, people have labeled each other by the divisions of caste, based upon one’s profession. It is a very strange notion to approach another human being by such labeling. Because of the multi-faceted division of labor, Durkheim argues that everyone is dependent upon each other for fulfilling personal needs, so it would be meaningless to treat people differently based upon class. In fact, Durkheim argued that the imposition of class and castes, which bar people from higher functions to which they aspire, is the source of civil wars, not the basis for harmony in society (1964, p. 374).

On the other hand, social harmony occurs when, “harmony between the constitution of each individual and his condition is realized” (Durkheim, 1964, p. 376). For this harmony between the individual and their condition to occur, it is not sufficient that persons simply be “not relegated to determinate functions by force, but also that no obstacle, of whatever nature, prevents them from occupying the place in the social framework which is compatible with their faculties” (Durkheim, 1964, p. 377). This process by which obstacles fall away or are removed, Durkheim calls ‘spontaneity.’ As indicated in the citation, he envisions a process that does not simply eliminate all acted out (“express”) violence but one in which all inequalities and obstacles to equality have fallen away except for those social inequalities that “exactly express natural inequalities” (Durkheim, 1964, p.377). Central to this harmonious society is freedom. When people can freely aspire to any occupation, despite customs, lack of wealth, or birth; when public office is “more and freely open to everybody with no question as to wealth”; when society reduces “disparity as far as possible by assisting in various ways those who find themselves in a disadvantageous position” and aid “them to overcome it,”
then an organic society will emerge (Durkheim, 1964, p.379). People can only be free to choose what they will be and what they will do when the external obstacles to access to work, political office, education, etc. are removed through the spontaneous process Durkheim described.

Durkheim went even further. Rather than following the traditional distinction of justice through charity, he argued that “for men to recognize and mutually guarantee rights, they must, first of all, love each other, they must, for some reason, depend upon each other and on the same society of which they are a part” (1964, p. 121). A society is interdependent upon its members for its social harmony; however, in India the whole concept of labor seems to be different because individuals are identified by their profession which is based upon caste and treated accordingly. Such acts reflect a denial of human rights which contradict any human values. A society needs some division of labor, but such a division should not completely identify an individual’s worth. A person should not be denied human rights because they hold some lower occupation in society. It is inhuman to treat someone only by their profession or poor education. Every human has rights and it is the duty of every individual to protect the rights of their neighbors. Clearly, Ambedkar, Berlin and many other social crusaders agree that ultimately the principle that should bind people together should be respect for one another’s freedom. The concept of dharma based upon occupation can be acceptable if it is understood as Durkheim described the division of labor in a society.

4.1.4 Dharma with the Nature of Flexibility

Human society always undergoes continual changes. Sometimes these changes are treated as a threat to the traditional way of thinking and long-established customs. The ancient Indian society opened itself to essential changes (Radhakrishnan, 1947, p. 113). The purpose of these changes is for the continual existence of the society. Dharma functioned as the fundamental principle of moral and religious duties for the ancient Indians. These laws
were developed by sages who lived during the fifth century. Dharma has grown over the years and has built-in flexibility. According to Dharmasturas "a rite may vary according to the custom (dharma) of a region" (Bowles, 2007, p. 109), which shows its flexible, contextual nature. According to Hacker, dharma underlies all moral principles, but all these moral principles are not common to all human beings (2006, p.482). Dharma cannot be identified with any fixed institution. It is deeply connected with human nature and continues to evolve through various historical embodiments. Its changes depend upon the type of society (Radhakrishnan, 1947, p. 114).

Radhakrishnan states that there can be no single law for all human situations. It must vary depending upon the circumstances. Human beings have one law during times of peace and another law during times of suffering. "So dharma is known to depend on circumstances. Therefore it is changed for one that seems better and it is again found harmful demanding change. Therefore we see non-unity among customs at all times" (1960, p. 161). Change is an important element of any living society. Change is something that happens in nature. For example, a child grows and becomes an adult over the years, but during this change, the child does not lose the essence of a human being. The essence of dharma is maintained during the changes that happen in the universe, which helps preserve the balance between everything that it underlies. Dharma preserves the unity during changes because the chief characteristic of dharma is social flexibility. Radhakrishnan urges people to “introduce changes today, and make the content of Hindu dharma relevant to modern conditions” (1947, p. 115).

With all the technological developments of the modern world, skill-based occupations were made available to all, and while many of the past conflicts were overcome, new kinds of class consciousness arose. In practice, these difficulties resolve themselves as the underlying guidelines of dharma keep surfacing, helping to prevent the breakdown of the solidarity and
unity of the nation. Indian society seeks the peaceful co-existence between various cultural values. Malhotra asserts,

The contextual serves the universal morality and is an individualized expression of it. In other words, the contextual dharma applies the principles of higher universal dharma of benevolence and compassion to specific contexts. Thus dharma thought offers both universal and contextual poles—not just the latter as that would be tantamount to moral relativism. (2013, p. 198)

A multiplicity of cultures rubs shoulders in the largely Hindu community of India. Plurality in its various guises becomes part and parcel of the nation and, in a manner, its true wealth. India, being home not only to Hindu religions, but to Christianity and Islam, upholds secularism. To protect plurality by liberal policies is the mainstay of the country’s political system. Religious canons can have a role in resolving conflicts. These canons include a deep level of absolute principles. In the Indian context, the dharma or code of moral norms that have operated in specific way, can be considered a universal application, since it extends beyond the Berlinian perspective. Principles of benevolence, of ahimsa which is the moral principle of non-violence in thought, word or deed, a policy of tolerance and positive good will to all beings, and compassion—all of these are applicable to mundane contextual dharma. Malhotra explains this notion, stating:

Relative truths are necessarily contextual, and only the absolute truth transcends all contexts. The universal goals of dharma get implemented via the particular context-specific dharma. The particular fits the universal. The universal injunction and particular prescriptions thus work together. The relationship between these two levels of truths should not be bipolar but bifocal. (2013, p. 198)

To understand such truths from a bifocal perspective requires an understanding of value pluralism similar to that of Berlin. Berlin always emphasizes that value pluralism is an expression of human beings, and reality cannot be unified under a single principle. The nature of value pluralism is better understood through the evolution of historical changes. The changes in the history have shown that dignity and freedom are essential for reshaping any
social order. One of the deeper aims of *dharma* is to help individuals attain fullness in their own moral and intellectual life, then to assist everyone else realize liberty. *Dharma* is not just a principle; it is also action. Just having knowledge about *dharma* is not helpful, it must be practiced. *Dharma* becomes meaningful only through realization. One must practice it over and over based upon the virtues in the realm of truth.

**4. 2 Pluralism in Hinduism**

The Vedas are the sacred texts of Hinduism which originated from ancient Indian civilization. They have shown the pluralistic nature of Hinduism both at the metaphysical and socio-cultural level. The description of truth at the metaphysical level is pluralistic.

For example, it is believed that if two *Sruti* traditions are in conflict, both of them are to be held as law. The inherently pluralistic ethos of Hinduism is reflected on the one hand, in the wide and divergent range of beliefs and ideas and, on the other, in stratification, customs, traditions and behaviour patterns. (Momin, 1996, p. 101)

Hinduism has greatly contributed a pluralist society to India due its own pluralist nature, which is seen in its wide range of deities, beliefs, customs, and intellectual traditions. Ramayana is one of the important Hindu literatures which has several versions, which are deeply influenced by elements of culture and the geographical location of people. Similarly, many other Hindu traditional practices also bear the imprint of pluralism.

The pluralistic nature of Hinduism is rooted in harmony and tolerance. Due to this reason, it has immersed itself in many traditions and religious practices leading to India’s multiple perceptions of reality. According to Rig Veda (1.64.46) “Truth is One, though the sages know it variously” (cited in Khand, 2010, p. 18). Such a thought is not found in any other world religions. Hinduism comprehends reality itself in a pluralistic way, and everyone’s understanding of reality is deeply influenced by one’s cultural and social conditions. Plurality “is a natural expression of the human condition and needs to be accepted
as such” (McGraw & Formicola, 2005, p. 178). Hinduism’s approach to understanding reality would appreciate Berlin’s notion of human nature. He holds that human nature is inherently pluralistic, and people need to accept this as normal human expression. Hinduism accepts its various traditions which have portrayed the relationship between the reality and humans in various ways depending upon their philosophical viewpoints (McGraw & Formicola, 2005, p. 182). Pluralism and diversity are the greatest contributions of Hinduism to the world, because Hinduism sees plurality as deeply rooted in human nature. In Hindu culture, pluralism and diversity are appreciated in a dharmic-like flexibility and an active dynamic pattern of mutual relationship. Hinduism has greatly witnessed to pluralism for many centuries because of its contextual approach to understand humans in their cultural and historical conditions. The nature of India’s social and cultural traditions cannot be understood without a proper knowledge of Hinduism.

India’s social and cultural practices are deeply influenced by the tradition of Hinduism. India has been perceived as an extremely tolerant nation due to its Hindu characteristic of being pluralistic, which incorporated itself in various traditions without losing its essence of harmony. However, the pluralistic nature of Hinduism is in jeopardy due to the pseudo-nationalists who have been using the rhetoric of Hindutva. These pseudo-nationalists think that pluralism is a threat to the integral unity of the nation, and their effort to provoke nationalism has been antagonistic rather than helpful. Carol Schmitt, a Western philosopher, thinks that pluralism can destroy the unity of a nation and might even lead to war among the people rather than protecting them from outsiders.

4.3 Antagonism in Pluralism

India is a liberal democratic nation with many religions, cultures, languages and traditions. The nation suffered many years under colonial power, but then became a
democratic nation considered a success offering great hope for its citizens. In recent years, the resurgence of a new nationalism movement has created a new antagonism in this pluralistic society, which is traditionally known for its agonistic pluralist nature.

Even though India has been a pluralistic nation since its early history, the difficulties which India’s current liberal democracy faces in upholding pluralism and its secular ideals cannot be ignored. Time and again, the issues of communal disturbances, religious bigotry, corruption and violence raise their ugly head. The dangers of ethnic conflict, fundamentalism and class conflicts and the erosion of negative liberty are threats to the nation. The threat posed by positive liberty can be exemplified by Berlin’s critical account of authoritarian regimes with expressionist policies.

Providing suitable options for one’s values requires negative liberty, but it is also necessary to define the extent to which positive liberty helps resolve conflict among value systems. Berlin’s value pluralism throws light on the many causes of pluralism, and his insights provide an anchor for the analysis of India’s pluralist society. To comprehend his deep understanding of value pluralism, one must explore his investigation of negative liberty, positive liberty and the incommensurabilities within liberty itself. To monitor and maintain value liberalism under a democratic model is no easy task. The government of a democracy is committed to protecting diversity and ensuring the options required to remain open. The democratic mechanism has proved worthy and capable of rising to the task, despite setbacks. Why does the modern Indian face so many issues related to anti-pluralistic communities? Guha argues that Indian pluralism was strengthened by its national leaders during the freedom fight against the British, but it continues to remain fragile. Some fundamental religious movements and linguistic aspirations remain a great threat to the notion of a pluralist nation (2013). The notion of India’s plurality continues to remain incomplete and becomes an easy target for pseudo-political achievements. This issue will be analyzed in the
light of Berlin’s value pluralism in the next chapter, because Berlin’s understanding of pluralism has a significant relevance and application to the context of India’s pluralistic society.

Agonism is derived from the Greek word ‘agon’ which means ‘struggle.’ Agonism is a political theory which explains the positive aspects of certain forms of political conflict. It accepts the fact that struggles are inevitable in a pluralistic society, but it shows how one might accept these struggles and channel them in a positive manner which is endorsed by the researcher because it is has the very nature of Berlin’s value pluralism. Antagonism is another aspect of a pluralistic society. It means a strong hostility which results in opposition, active resistance and can even end in physical violence. A sudden rise of antagonism questions the credibility of a liberal democratic nation’s smooth function. Carl Schmitt is one of the critics of liberal democracy. His criticism shows some of the failures of liberal democracy when it is undermined by antagonism. His notion of the ‘political’ is distinct from a politics which involves an antagonism that undermines the unity of the state. He believes that the antagonism within a society can be solved only through the creation of an external enemy. A reason for antagonism “is the creation of a ‘we’ by the delimitation of a ‘they,’ the possibility always exists that this we/they relation will turn into a relation of the friend/enemy type…” (Mouffe, 1993, pp. 2-3). The ‘friend-and-enemy’ type of relationship results in antagonism and brings instability to a state due to its very pluralistic nature.

Schmitt is critical of the attitude of states that bows to individualism and which pays obeisance to the spirit of free associations, insisting that the key function of the state is to protect itself from outside threat. He emphasizes that a pluralistic state cannot stand united because the pluralist theory of state is in itself pluralistic; that is, it has no center but draws its thoughts from rather different intellectual circles (religion, economics, liberalism, socialism, etc.). It ignores the central concept of every theory of state, the political one, and does not
even mention the possibility that the pluralism of associations could lead to a federally
constructed political entity (Schmitt, 2007, pp. 44-45).

To be a political state, in Schmitt’s sense, requires then not just a prior commitment to
friendly domestic relations and the social solidarity they engender, but also to a particular
form of life in which group identity is valued above physical existence (O’Meara, 2010). His
political notion advocates a communitarian approach. He strongly rejects pluralism or using
political authority for the sake of the common good. For Schmitt, it is impossible to imagine
democracy with homogeneity. Every smooth function of the state, he believes, depends upon
homogeneity. Only through homogeneity can equality evolve, but not in a society which has
many races, religions and traditions. A basic element of any state is a strong political unity. If
there is no unity, it is not possible for a state to exist. Mouffe states, “This unity must be
provided by a common substance, in which the citizens share, which will enable them to be
treated as equals in a democracy” (1993, p.129). A ‘common substance’ deeply relies upon
the homogeneity of a state which helps the citizens treat others as equals, not as unequal or
enemies. As Schmitt further explicated, “A world in which the possibility of war is utterly
eliminated, a completely pacified globe, would be a world without the distinction of friend
and enemy and hence a world without politics” (Schmitt, 1996, pp. 34-35). His vision of a
state leaves no room for pluralism and eventually aims at a perfect society which has no
internal conflicts. A state without internal conflicts is not possible for Berlin. He argues that
history has shown that totalitarianism and authoritarianism are the products of desiring a
homogeneous state.

The challenge of upholding value pluralism is to justify the co-existence of diverse
values and cultures within a nation and the policies of its government. The threat would be an
oppressive authority in the form of state intervention, which sees pluralism as representing
the enemies within. In India, according to pseudo-nationalists, the ‘enemy within’ are those
who follow the native religion and comply with some of its outdated practices. These pseudonationalists think that unifying India means to get rid of its pluralistic nature. Some state persons think that the pluralistic nature of a state should be abolished because it becomes an obstacle to achieving the common good. A pluralistic society requires that other people should be “considered not as an enemy to be destroyed, but as an adversary whose existence is legitimate and must be tolerated” (Mouffe, 1993, p.10). In a liberal democratic society anyone has the right to defend their rights at any cost. This ‘agonistic pluralism’ is a reality in modern democracies, so one should not see it as a threat but rather understand this political reality from the Berlinian perspective, which recognizes the reality of pluralism in human nature itself. Historical evidence shows that India has faced threats to this diversity, but it prevailed during the struggle for independence, and in the post-independent era the ideals of ahimsa have been sought.

Radhakrishnan shows an aversion to the attitudes of narrow nationalism by stating “Love of one’s native soil, loyalty to regional traditions do not mean violent hostility to one’s neighbors... self-interest, material greed and lust for domination are the operative ideals. Patriotism has killed piety, and passion logic” (1947, p. 14). There is a radical antithesis between the acceptance and tolerance of diverse pluralism, and the cult of a nation’s fetish.

As an astute statesman, Radhakrishnan stated:

there was a time when military methods were able to result in success for our views. Those days are over. An aerial bombardment today makes no distinction between the combatant and the civilian. A thermo-nuclear bombardment will not make any distinction of nations. We have, therefore come to a state when it would be possible for us, by merely pressing a button, to destroy a whole continent. By trying to win leadership of in the development these diabolical weapons we are not likely to help our own views. We have come to realize we must live together or die together, and if we are to live together, we must have tolerance of other people’s views; religious tolerance, ideological tolerance, and these are the things that have become inevitable in the interests of self-preservation. (Occasional Speeches and Writings, 1952-59, p.51)
Today’s world has no political structure that is not thoroughly national in spirit, defining the friend/enemy dichotomy as constituting the very realm of the political. All of the above reflections emphasize that value pluralism and the policies of a state have distinct roles in creating ways to promote diversity by respecting differences. Parekh summarizes the importance of cultural diversity in stating:

Thanks to globalization and the changing nature of modern technology, no society today can insulate itself against eternal influences… Capital, technology, people, ideas, and so on move freely across territorial boundaries and introduce new forms of thought and life,… Since cultural diversity characterizes almost all societies, albeit in different degrees, they must either find ways of coming to terms with and even profiting from it, or suppress or marginalize it by somehow homogenizing themselves. The latter is impossible because it involves an unacceptable degree of internal repression, limited contacts with the outside world, forcible assimilation of cultural minorities, restrictions on foreign travel, control of the media, total bans on foreign literature and technology and so forth. The only choice left to any society today is to manage and build on the creative potential of its diversity. (Parekh, 2000, p. 171)

As Berlin would say, statesmen should acquire perceptive judgment in the political arena as a skill for appropriate action, suited to a specific situation, by possessing a ‘sense of reality’ applicable to the larger context. The twenty-first century needs to overcome rationalism, individualism and universalism in order to understand the deeper nature of pluralism. It is important to “rethink democratic politics in such a way that space is allowed for pluralism and individual freedom” (Mouffe, 1993, p.122). Such a democratic environment is possible when a democratic state embodies the values of secularism. Even though a state can claim to be democratic, if it does not follow the values of secularism then its democracy might not embody liberal pluralistic values.

4.4 Indian Secularism Vs Western Secularism

A simple description of secularism is the separation of the state and religion, such that the state does not interfere with the affairs of indigenous religions and religions do not get
involved in the regular operation of the state. Secularism treats everyone as equals. It should apply to both believers of various religions and non-believers as well. An important feature of the secular state is to allow its citizens religious freedom. The state has no right to interfere or ill-treat any citizen because of his/her religion which is not indigenous. Secularism is a principle which relies upon human abilities for the modernization of a state and its society, and always has independent views based upon reason rather than indigenous religious values.

Secularism was a product of the Age of Enlightenment in Europe. During the eighteenth century, many enlightenment thinkers argued for the freedom of the state from the church. During this period many thinkers showed the importance of empiricism and science, rather than religious dogmas. This Enlightenment Movement introduced a whole new meaning of freedom and how a state should function in relation to its religion. Secularism has had a huge influence on the laws of some Western countries.

India too claims to be a secular nation, but many scholars have questioned this claim because India's constitution does not specify clear regulations for the separation of state and religion. The reason is that the Indian state has adopted various laws and regulations which are based upon religions. Consequently, Indian citizens are treated according to their religion, caste and region. Some scholars have defended this understanding of Indian secularism, claiming it is based upon the Indian context, which is not similar to Western ideas of secularism. To better understand India's notion of secularism, one must look at its constitution and its earlier history.

4.4.1 Secularism in Indian Constitution

India's democracy sets out the basic right of the individual to follow the religion of one's choice. The fundamental freedom to practice one's religion also assumes the right of particular faiths to organize and run their religious institutions any way they want to, subject to the laws of the land. Articles 15 and 16 of the Indian Constitution guarantee that there will
be no discrimination on the grounds of religion. The rationale of Indian secularism is that “Religious liberty is based not on considerations, political expediency but on the conviction of the ultimate oneness of the religious quest, however numerous the different paths which might be followed” (Smith, 1967, p. 493). India is a pluralistic society which has many religions. Hinduism is the dominating religion, but India is also the birthplace of Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Hinduism has been the central force in the nation’s cultural, moral and philosophical decisions. Some scholars criticize the country’s constitution because it tolerates religions’ laws rather than taking a strong stand based upon parliamentary laws.

The forty-second Amendment of the Constitution of India (1976) declares that India is a secular nation. However, it does not articulate the relationship between religion and state and does not mention an official state religion. India’s ancient heritage is deeply rooted in religion. Many thinkers and scholars of India could not imagine the nation without its indigenous religion. For “Mohandas Gandhi’s secularism rested on the notions that all religions are true, that they give meaning to the moral life, and that Indian society can be built on a community of religious communities” (Madan, 1987, p. 747). The Constitution of India cannot be viewed from the perspective of Western secularism because India has been the homeland to many religions for centuries. Present day secularism is the result of ancient Indian intellectual history, religions and the acceptance of pluralism. According to Amartya Sen, “there are two principal approaches to secularism, focusing respectively on (1) neutrality between different religions, and (2) prohibition of religious associations in state activities” (2005, 19). Sen emphasizes that true Indian secularism stresses the first of these, neutrality, rather than the second. This neutrality is seen in the seemingly unequal laws in the Constitution. The laws about marriage, divorce, inheritance and alimony vary depending upon one’s religion. These unequal laws are not meant to treat the citizens unequally, but to show respect for the country’s plurality. Another reason is that the Constitution of India
accommodates every individual depending upon his/her religion. Some thinkers suggest that this unequal application of law causes further confusion because “true’ secularism will make no exceptions for institutions, family law, or voting blocs of any religion” (Acevedo, 2013, p. 145). India’s understanding of secularism is not similar to the Western concept because religion is more significant for most Indians for whom everything that revolves around them is based upon religious notions. To understand further the influence of religion, one needs to look into the ancient history of India.

4.4.2 The Pre-Islamic Hindu Rulers and their Mission

The pre-Islamic Hindu rulers of India were known for building huge and grand temples; their mission was deeply concerned with protecting their citizens’ material needs and moral well-being. For this reason many rulers were considered the leaders of spirituality as well as of the state. These two aspects became inseparable for ages. For many rulers the country’s moral well-being was more important than the material needs of the people. In order to emphasize their citizens’ moral well-being, many rulers constructed several huge temples. These temples are known not only for their sacredness, but also their witness to the cultural heritage, intellectual depth and the history of ancient India. The rulers were patrons of temples and mutts because they supported them financially. These temples were seen as the central teaching places of moral well-being; the rulers also asserted their power to uphold the dharma through the construction of temples (Acevedo, 2013, p. 149). And so from ancient India, religion and state were inseparable because religion determined every aspect of a person’s moral life. Every aspect of the religion became the cultural and intellectual aspects of the individual. Even the British rulers supported the native religion for the sake of maintaining their commercial activities; they even formed a separate administrative body to deal with the native religious activities. This led the Indian government to establish various Hindu religious and charitable endowments at the end of colonial era (Acevedo, 2013, p.
The contemporary government upholds these established practices to guard the native religion by using its own resources.

4.4.3 Nationalism and the Native Religion

Many Hindu scholars have noted that Hinduism is by nature very secular and the results can be seen in the success of India as a secular nation (Anand, 2012, p.151). Copland also uses an editorial quote published in 1996 in the Organiser: “Hinduism is secularism par excellence.” (2010, p. 123). Some others find Hinduism as the secular modus vivendi (Anand, 2012, p.151). The general understanding of Hinduism is that it is the most tolerant religion and very inclusive in comparison with other world religions. During the nineteenth century, India’s nationalism movement emerged due to the British rule. Its main aim was to free the country from the British rule. This nationalism movement in the year 1885 led to the creation of the Indian National Congress (INC) which controlled the government for several decades. INC brought the national father Mohandas K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru’s view of secularism, but other leaders used Hinduism in the interest building up nationalism (Hibbard, 2010, p149). One must question the credibility of the politicians who use religion for their political purposes. Some of these malicious individuals use some unwanted elements of orthodox Hinduism like caste practices, women’s rights and minority rights for their political end. Some of them and their political parties have created a bad image of India’s secularism by the riots in New Delhi against the Sikhs (1984), the destruction of the Babri Masjid (1992), the Gujarat riots (2002) and the Kandhamal Riots (2008) (Roy, 2009, p.13).

Regardless of such social anomalies, however, India continues to survive as a secular nation because the very creation of the nation was based upon secular principles.

The spirit of “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity” is the fundamental element for any liberal democratic state. Embodying secularism enables a state to make these fundamental elements a living reality. India strives to keep its democratic spirit, but various fundamentalist
groups pose threats to the fundamental elements of democracy. So it is important to protect secularism in order to save democracy in India. Many nations claim to be democratic, but they compromise its principles by giving more importance to the values of religion. India cannot give up its secular ideals because its democracy cannot be realized without secularism. The ideals of secularism create an environment where every person can pursue his/her wish without the interference of others. The ideals of secularism make it possible for people of different faiths and cultural traditions to live together harmoniously. Berlin argued that any form of denying freedom is a degradation of human beings. The twentieth century witnessed many totalitarian governments and fundamentalist movements which caused more and more suffering. So it is very important for India to protect its secular ideals because without them India cannot be a democratic nation. The nation has come a long way since colonial rule, but it can achieve still more if it makes secular ideals a living reality. The nation has a commendable constitution which clearly stands for secular ideals, but the fundamentalists who do not respect and appreciate the plurality of the nation are still a threat to India’s democracy. The notion of democracy can suffer greatly if it varies by majority and minority. India’s democracy has to practice secular ideals for the well-being of its people, but it needs do some internal auditing about laws which are based upon outdated religious practices.

4.4.4 Internal Auditing

Secular and liberal democratic nations are an ideal place for individuals to pursue their ends rather than the nations which clung to the ancient religions practices (Anand, 2012, p.158). Several times, history has shown that many riots and persecutions resulted from intolerant monistic religious views. The intolerant and monistic religious views tend to interfere with the freedom of the individuals. In Berlin’s viewpoint, this means denying the individuals the very essence of being human. Secularism in India has survived for many decades, but today it is going through a crisis because of the communal violence created by
some fundamentalists (Copland, 2010, p.124). Why do such communal violence events take place in a nation which is called a secular nation? There are two reasons. The first is that the Indian Constitution does not clearly articulate the state’s relationship with its native religion. The second is the continuation of unethical outdated practices of orthodox Hinduism, like caste distinctions and discrimination against women which have never been brought to public deliberation. Such orthodox practices need to be deliberated because they obviously contradict the principles of any secular democratic nation.

The Constitution states that India is a secular nation, but it needs to clearly articulate the state’s role in supporting religion. Even though it acts neutral towards religions, it needs a clearer articulation about the state’s relations with them. Some articles of the Constitution dictate certain rules and regulations based upon one’s religious identity. Such laws, unequally applied, can lead to unfair treatments of some citizens, especially the poor and vulnerable. Some bad politicians abuse these kinds of unequal laws. Anand states that “As long as different personal laws (based on one’s religion) exist, it becomes easier for politicians to play on people’s differences (2012, p.159). These kinds of unequal laws and regulations need to change, otherwise they will become obstacles to the progress of the nation. A serious internal auditing has to be done to purify the outdated practices that exist in orthodox religious systems. These orthodox practices continue to exist because the Constitution offers various supports and reservations based upon one’s caste and religion. Anand states;

A uniform civil code will help India develop into a truly modern state and create an environment where all citizens are treated equally. This will also promote social interaction, as well as eliminate some of the discriminatory practices against women. (2012, p.160)

On one hand, India continues to struggle not only to keep its pluralistic heritage, but also to eliminate dehumanizing practices done in the name of traditional religion. There were many crusaders fighting against the inequalities that exist in the nation. One who is greatly revered
is Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar who clearly pointed out the inhumanity that happens in the name of orthodox religious practices.

4.5 Ambedkar vs Radhakrishnan

During the British colonial era in India, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar became a voice against the social discrimination that continued to exist in the name of religious practices. He stood up for the rights of women and equal treatment of the untouchables (dalits). He wished that every person in society could become part of the mainstream and lead a normal life, regardless of their birth status. During the freedom struggle, he fought for the oppressed people who were not treated equally in their own motherland, which made him an iconoclast of his time. His fight for the fundamental rights of the oppressed was one of the greatest crusades of Indian history. Berlín rightly said that denying freedom to any individual in a society means taking away the essence of one’s humanness. Ambedkar fought to restore the humanness of individuals who had been outcasts because of various religious practices.

He firmly believed that it is the responsibility of the state to create and direct opportunities for citizens at the bottom of society. He brought about many legal measures to benefit such caste groups and ‘dalits,’ ensuring equal rights before the law, such as equal opportunity for education and work, and he prevented the oppression of these marginalized groups by various legal provisions. Various constitutional laws are now in place to protect the interests of the tribes and groups like ‘dalits’ who had been subjected to discrimination. Ambedkar gave up his own traditional religion and became a Buddhist because of the discriminatory practices that existed in orthodox Hinduism during his lifetime. All his life he fought against discrimination, especially the treatment of the untouchables. He realized the evil in caste and class divisions of the society because it is cruel, barbarous and inhuman. It is unnatural and unscientific to divide individuals into various classes based upon one’s birth.
Ambedkar made every effort to ban this unfair human division because it destroys the goodness of India’s great civilization. It remains an obstacle to the unity, peace and progress of the state because it keeps people from realizing the essential human principles of equality, fraternity and liberty.

Ambedkar and other social crusaders have raised their voices against some of the orthodox practices which created great inequalities among people. He argued that the nature of the caste system violates the rights of an individual. Yet a scholar like Radhakrishnan advocated the need for social divisions in even a democratic society because it helps society to function smoothly. The traditional division of society in Hindu culture consists of four castes, while anyone who does not fit into these four divisions is considered untouchable (dalits). In fact, Radhakrishnan even thinks that this system is just, not only for orthodox Hindu society, but for all humankind because this kind of division is found all over the world. He claims that the fourfold system enables a community to function in harmony. The highest of the castes, the Brahmins, are the seekers of wisdom. Their function is to teach and improve others’ knowledge. The second, the Kshatriya, are those capable of ruling and leading society by following the principles of the Brahmins. The third, the Vaisya, are skilled in trade and commerce. The lowest are the Sudras, who work and serve others. Beyond these are the untouchables. “Labor [which is the role of the sudras] is essential to the ordered life of human society,” claims Radhakrishnan, “and therefore a sense of the dignity of labor, which is now unfortunately lost, has to be steadily cultivated” (Samartha, 1964, p.76).

Radhakrishnan believed that this fourfold division can create balance and equality in society by enabling every individual to contribute according to his/her capabilities. At the same time, he does not support the traditional view of caste divisions because one’s occupation should not be based upon birth, yet he seems to believe that this fourfold division is essential for democratic society.
Radhakrishnan strongly believes that this fourfold division should be based upon social functions. He attempts to shows this by listing five reasons: “first, it recognizes the spiritual equality of all men. Whatever may be the outward circumstances, each individual is a personality, with the right to grow in his own way” (Samartha, 1964, p.76). Second, the fourfold division creates a positive sense among human beings by not asking persons to contribute to society in a manner beyond which they are capable. Third, all kinds of works are important for a community’s peaceful function. Fourth, “the social justice it offers is not a scheme of rights, but of opportunities. With this claim, equality is understood not in terms of ability, but in terms of opportunities open to all individuals to contribute to the good of the society” (Samartha, 1964, p.77). Finally, this fourfold division creates a foundation for democracy because it recognizes all kinds of individual skills. Thus, according to Samartha, “it ensures harmony among spiritual knowledge, political power, economic skill, and physical labor” (Samartha, 1964, p.77). This fourfold division is necessary for the normal life of a community, “but these divisions are not based upon birth but upon ethical personality types without one being any higher, purer or more important than another” (Minor, 1998).

Clearly, Radhakrishnan’s concept of caste is not like what exists in contemporary India. Perhaps in myth, but certainly not in history, can he point to such an ‘ideal’ being followed in India’s society. In Indian society as it actually exists, those with power discriminate against those of lower castes. In Hinduism, one’s position in society is believed to be determined by one’s karma. Therefore, those who are poor, oppressed, downtrodden, and sentenced to menial tasks are considered to deserve these hardships because of their own karma. Caste is linked to birth, so one must follow the caste one is born into, do the work of that caste and follow all of its obligations.

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6 *Karma* means deeds that an individual performs. The deeds one did in one’s previous lifetime determine one’s present life.
The belief that every Hindu is spiritually equal to any other person because of \textit{atman} is nowhere to be seen in everyday living. In fact, many untouchables or those of the lower castes are considered impure. This system creates in the oppressed people a "false consciousness" by which they internalize the negative attributions of the higher castes and see themselves as rightly discriminated against. Further, this system is socialized by Hindu tradition through the story of the god \textit{Manu}, who it claims decreed the caste system. Whereas caste in one way or another permeates Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism in India, it can always be protested against on the basis of what these religions hold to be true. The case of Hinduism is ambiguous because it is open to various interpretations. Though one might appeal to spiritual equality because of the \textit{atman} in everyone, the story of the god \textit{Manu} takes precedence.

As a matter of fact, the Indian Constitution declares India to be a secular, democratic state, despite the fact that the majority of its citizens are Hindu. At the same time, the national government recognizes the reality of caste and has a kind of "affirmative action plan" with regard to caste. Though Indian democracy maintains the ideal of equality, granting "every citizen the equal opportunity to voice one's reasons and to reject ones offered by others," so as to "ensure that dialogue is free and open and guided" (Bohman & Rehg, 1997, p. 322), in practice, the majority of government positions are held by powerful individuals who often prevent those of lower castes from effectively attaining their rights. The value of the declaration that the Indian state is secular and democratic is thereby reduced to words on paper, but does not help the nation attain the vision of Ambedkar, the principal architect of the Constitution of India.

But one thing that reformers of Indian society lack, which was part of the civil rights movement in the United States, is the ability to appeal to religious motivation as well as to civil law. As mentioned, reformers can appeal to the fundamental spiritual equality of all
because of *ātman*, but that tradition is not stronger than the myth of *Manu*. Also, it is not to the advantage of some, who are keepers of the religious traditions of Hinduism, to emphasize the spiritual equality of all, because that would undermine their determination to preserve the caste and class system of the country. According to Ambedhkar, such a tradition "is the very negation of the spirit of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" (cited in Roy, 2014).

### 4.6 Conclusion

The essential nature of India has been pluralistic, which originated from its ancient religious practices. These practices have been reflected in the notions of *dharma*, which are found in the sacred texts. *Dharma* can apply to any specific situation or context, but only with a groundwork of thoughtful morality, tied to ethical ideals and humanitarian concerns. The ultimate aim of *dharma* is to help individuals and societies to attain fullness in their moral and intellectual life, so that everyone may achieve true liberation. For some reason, the essential meaning of *dharma* has been misused to justify some unacceptable social practices. Such practices deny the dignity and freedom of individuals who come from poor economic backgrounds. Berlin's understanding of value pluralism helps to re-examine the essence of the country's traditional values.

Berlin holds that an individual must be given space to cherish their dignity and freedom, regardless of the social class to which one belongs. His ideas may even encourage strengthening traditional values systems, as long as they are not misused in the name of nationalism or any other utopian ideologies. After gaining independence in 1947, the nation embraced democracy, which has been a success story, but contemporary political ideas concerning sovereignty and democracy are antagonistic to the ideal of pluralism. Berlin's philosophy demonstrates how a respect for pluralism can be sustained in the face of both sovereignty and democracy. A nation like India needs to make efforts to balance the older
pluralistic tradition with modern Western political frameworks. It is important for India to develop its own approach to promoting democracy in the face of globalization, rather than letting itself accede to the destructive forces of nationalism. Many social crusaders and political scholars oppose the destructive forces of the nation’s traditional value systems, but obviously India needs to find a way to educate its people to correctly understand their traditional values and their pluralistic purposes.
CHAPTER 5
APPLICATION OF BERLIN’S VALUE PLURALISM TO INDIAN PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

In the previous chapters, Isaiah Berlin’s value pluralism and its deeper connection to human freedom and political conditions have been studied, along with the contemporary Indian political situation. In this chapter, the researcher would like to explore further and understand how Berlin’s notion of value pluralism may be applicable and how it can help to restore traditional values to contemporary India, where several questions regarding its pluralistic origin have been raised. India is a pluralistic nation and many of its intellectuals are convinced that the strength and the future of the nation depend upon preserving its pluralistic origin. Berlin would argue for sustaining the pluralistic origin because, for him, human nature is inherently pluralistic and human beings cannot escape the reality of pluralism. In other words, pluralism not only originates from cultural backgrounds, but is part of the very essence of human nature. Human beings therefore tend to create multiple values based upon their own cultural and religious backgrounds—values that one cannot easily discard in favor of other values. Because of this, human beings need the freedom to make right decisions for themselves, depending upon their situation. Berlin warns about historical movements that have tried to reduce pluralism to monism which ended in human misery. His idea of value pluralism has wide implications for preserving pluralistic traditional values in a democratic nation, even in the face of globalization.

5.1 Value Pluralism and Positive Liberty

Berlin’s key understanding of human reality is influenced by value pluralism and negative liberty. His value pluralism endorses the diversity of human values while upholding
the importance of negative liberty. A diversity of values can continue to exist with negative liberty, but the researcher finds that positive liberty also plays a vital role in preserving value pluralism. The reason is that human lives are deeply connected to a community or a state. According to Aristotle, a human being is a political animal, therefore meant to live in a community or a state. Cooper finds in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* the importance of a community in supporting an individual’s life. He states that

> The best political structures will be those that advance the citizens’ individual well-being by providing appropriate contexts for them to develop the personal qualities and abilities that will permit them individually and collectively to lead the best human life. (2003, p.144)

A community or a state has the positive function of helping an individual lead a good life in order to attain happiness.

Human beings are deeply pluralistic beings, but need to have a certain amount of freedom and support to pursue pluralistic ends. Every individual is influenced by the customs and norms of their own social structure which often has no resemblance to other social structures that change according to a particular culture and geographical location. Human beings need to have a safe place to live and flourish, and for this reason they form communities. The simple reason is adults have responsibilities for raising younger ones (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 101). The original idea of a human community was to help individual citizens live up to the norms of that society. Usually these communities had certain rules based upon moral and ethical values. Every individual in a community was expected to follow its common rules and regulations, both for the good of oneself as well as the smooth functioning of the community. Even though the world has advanced so much in the area of technological development, still values and moralities seem to have an important role in human development (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 101). A society or a state plays a vital role in shaping and reshaping these values and moralities, the purpose of which is to promote human dignity and human worth. In order to do that, a community should be able to uphold
moral and social values such as rights, autonomy, dignity, freedom and equality. Plurality of values and freedom are core human characteristics. Regardless of their differences in social status, religious beliefs, cultures and personal ends, no one should be mistreated, because society has the responsibility to protect every individual’s well-being and must safeguard its pluralistic nature.

Unlike animals, human beings are able to reflect on their lives and actively pursue their pluralistic interests. The reason is that human beings have the ability to think independently, using their rational capacities to discover what is worthwhile for them. Human beings are distinguished from all other forms of life because of their capacities for rational activities. MacIntyre contends, “human beings, like the members of all other species, have a specific nature; and that nature is such that they have certain aims and goals, such that they move by nature towards a specific telos” (1984, p. 139). Human beings have ends—ultimate goals—which can differ according to their reasoning capability and their emotional commitment to a religious belief or a cultural influence. Such diversities can lead the individuals to demand fulfillment of their needs (Sen, 1999, p.156).

Even though human beings can reason independently, they still need some assistance from a society. Human beings are so dependent upon fellow humans because human nature is social and pluralistic. Human beings have an innate tendency to form communities. It is the special nature of humans to create norms for their living. “In Aquinas’ view, a society is a gathering of human beings, a gathering which has its own life and goals from which no member is excluded. Forms of government exist for one purpose: to help human beings attain their destiny” (O’Meara, 1997, p. 219). This principle of letting another attain his/her end is intrinsic to any modern liberal democratic society. Every individual in a society needs some support from others, because the world is complex and imperfect in many ways. For these reasons, people continually long for a perfect social order. Such a desire exists in all societies
around the world. A utopian society is not for pluralism but it deeply yearns for homogeneity. Such yearnings are misdirected.

A society that rejects diversity, whether knowingly or not, risks setting itself on the road to suppression and tyranny, whether the victims are ethnic minorities, adherents to religious faiths, or others who do not fit into the dominant faction’s understanding of truth, purity and rightness. (Jinkins, 2004, p. 125)

Berlin clearly indicates the issues aiming for a perfect political order, but which can lead to human hopelessness. A society can never have a single-pattern way of life due to the plurality that exists in human nature itself. Aiming for a perfect political order leads to monism which, by destroying the fundamental diversity of human life, gravely undermines the essence of humanity as a whole. Berlin repeatedly reminded us that political monism has been the cause of many ethnic cleansings, wars, and violence against the poor and vulnerable. Usually these monistic tendencies arise from dominant “religious, philosophical, scientific, aesthetic and political forms” when one raises the question, “How should human beings live together?” (Jinkins, 2004, pp. 6-7). This desire for a monistic or utopian society is not new in history. A utopian dream has always been to have a perfect society in this imperfect world, but it is deeply grounded in a monistic confidence. Many events in history have clearly shown that the creation of a utopian society has led to harmful consequences rather than helping to preserve humanity. Desiring a perfect political society lies deep within all human impulses because, as Aristotle says, “human beings are social and political animals.” One’s aspiration for a perfect society can help reshape and make the existing society a good one. A good society does not interfere with its own pluralistic nature; rather, it supports and strengthens it.

Berlin genuinely discourages the notion of utopianism because it aims at a monistic conception of truth in reshaping society. His understanding of value pluralism offers some insights about how to guard ancient India’s heritage of pluralism from a decline into cultural monism. For monism, truth is one, and there can be no contradiction to the one truth. So
when a society is reshaped with this notion, then pluralism is assumed as false, even contrary to the ultimate truth. Political monism can only lead to repression and tyranny because it takes away the freedom of people who disagree that truth is singular. Humanity has witnessed cruel leaders like Hitler, Pol Pot and many others whose visions aimed at creating a perfect society but ended in human misery (Berlin, 2014a). History has witnessed several incidents in which the concern for political monism tolerated no conflict, but everything must be done in the same pattern without respect for human diversity. One should not forget that conflicts are part of human reality and people are rational beings who make choices rather than blindly follow a “cut and dried” formula. The whole political environment in a monist society ends up in anxieties about the ruler and the ruled, since total obedience is expected as the ultimate requirement for the members of society. Berlin’s notion of value pluralism can be a warning to the whole world about when people fail to understand the pluralistic nature and diversity of being human. Failing to understand it can lead to human misery and create a major distraction to an entire human society. Today in some parts of the world, many people suffer because of the greed of the few who hunger for power and wealth. Berlin’s notion of value pluralism could help overcome such issues, which undermine the core of pluralistic human nature.

5.2 Value Pluralism for Contemporary India

India is the world’s largest democracy, known for the pluralistic nature of its religions, traditions, cultures, linguistic and geographical regions. India is known for its diversity which originated with its early civilization. It has been home to nearly 100 languages and 1,500 dialects. It has proved to the world that its peoples can live together regardless of their pluralistic religions, cultures and languages. For many centuries India has been known for living as a peaceful society with mutual respect for one another. But in recent years communal incidents have seemed to lead the nation astray from the spirit of its early
civilization and the founding fathers. Pluralism in India is not a recent phenomenon, but can be traced from its early civilization.

India has always been proud of its traditional plurality and tolerance, but present day events prove that the nation needs to work hard to preserve its traditions and to reflect upon its own goodness as a liberal democratic nation. India’s Constitution values the mutual respect, pluralism and basic rights of all individuals. How can a nation with an admirable constitution and a pluralistic history become a place for communal conflicts? Obviously the Indian Constitution helps to preserve the pluralistic nature of the nation, but it can easily be manipulated by political parties or well-organized groups who use the communal conflicts as a means to their political ends. Everyone has the responsibility to safeguard the heritage of India’s pluralistic nature because “[one] should not tolerate the intolerance that undermines our democracy, that impoverishes the lives of many Indians, and that facilitates a culture of impunity of tormentors” (Sen, 2016). India has witnessed social harmony from its earliest civilization, which relates deeply to rational philosophical systems. Ashoka, the great king of the third century BC, initiated inter-religious dialogues for the sake of harmony and toleration of others’ views. His era was known as a glorious period in India because he showed respect for the richness of the heterodoxy that existed in his time (Sen, 2005, p. xiii). Another great King, Akbar, followed the footsteps of King Ashoka in encouraging dialogue between the various religions and cultures in order to highlight the richness that exists in every one of them. Many incidents like this can be found in Indian history, showing that India has long been a heterogeneous nation which has involved itself in dialogue intended to understand and appreciate others’ views. So the concept of democracy and tolerance of intellectual heterodoxy are not something new to India and cannot be considered a gift from a colonial country, but it is a natural culmination of ancient heritage (Sen, 2005, p.12).
India’s growth and progress has taken place over many years in the natural processes of dialectic practice. For this reason India has long been a place of diversity and multiple voices. The nature of heterodoxy is deeply reflected in India’s intellectual traditions. It would be difficult to find any historical record which suggests that India was ever one in religion or culture, but there is much evidence that proves India has always been a pluralistic society. Regardless of its historic pluralistic nature, India suffers greatly from frequent threats to its pluralistic nature because of the promotion of religious fundamentalism by well-organized socio-religious groups which fear diversity. The rise of religious fundamentalism and the desire for economic prosperity create an illusion that homogenous model is a must for “India’s unity and survival” (Guha, 2013). Even India cannot be absolved from wishing to become a perfect society by getting rid of its pluralistic origins. Some think that having a particular national language or faith would help the nation progress faster, because it might strengthen national solidarity and function as a bridge between people and government. This way of thinking leads the nation into a path of intolerance, destroying value pluralism and hindering the nation from truly moving forward in peace and harmony.

Nevertheless, socio-religious fundamentalist groups strive to unify the nation by advocating one language and one religious practice, ignoring the very essence of human diversity and its purposes. They are caught up in their ideology and fail to understand that human beings are meant to live in freedom and pursue their pluralist ends in a way Berlin thinks and appreciates. Berlin showed the consequences of degrading humanness in pushing a nation toward a monist ideology. History has taught humankind the harmful consequences of desiring “the unity or harmony of human ends” (Berlin, 2002, p.4) in a society, inevitably leading to dreadful and results. Berlin states,

Surprising because there has, perhaps, been no time in modern history when so large a number of human beings, in both the East and the West, have had their notions, and indeed their lives, so deeply altered, and in some cases violently upset, by fanatically held social and political doctrines. Dangerous,
because when ideas are neglected by those who ought to attend to them - that is to say, those who have been trained to think critically about ideas - they sometimes acquire an unchecked momentum and an irresistible power over multitudes of men that may grow too violent to be affected by rational criticism. (2002, p.167)

In India, the socio-religious fundamentalists seem to believe that diversity leads a society to imperfection because it lacks unity of culture, religion, language, and nationalism. The measures taken by these groups undermine the very notion of Berlin’s understanding of freedom and value pluralism. Value pluralism, for Berlin, is “a philosophical and social approach to life is a positive and necessary provision, given the inescapable and irreducible plurality of values and goods, ends and truths created in and by human societies” (Jinkins, 2004, p.126). Human societies are naturally composed of a plurality of values and goods. It is not easy to deny these pluralities because human essence itself deeply involves a plurality of values and goods. From these values and goods, we create ends and truths which are also plural. Some fundamentalist groups in India think that being Indian means to follow a particular way of life. On the contrary, the early history of India clearly indicates that it has been a pluralist nation from the time of its ancient civilization, and a future without pluralism can lead to human despair. Through value pluralism, Berlin asserts that human beings can realize their goals and live as rational beings regardless of who they are.

Berlin’s value pluralism offers deep insights for maintaining the smooth functioning of any liberal democratic governments—a practical wisdom for state officials about how to overcome class divisions and the resulting social conflicts. His notion can help any nation waging war with rising issues of nationalism, human rights and political monism. The bottom line is that Berlin’s notion of value pluralism synchronizes perfectly with modern concepts of human rights. So any society or nation that stands for human rights must also practice value pluralism in every way.
5.2.1 Value Pluralism for Indian Liberal Democracy

A democratic state should enable everyone to enjoy freedom and to pursue their wishes without coercion. Such freedom includes following their own religion or none, choosing an occupation they like or marrying whomever they choose. These are some of the central issues of democratic freedom which defines who one is. “Berlin’s pluralist view of morality underpinned his defense of a pluralist liberal democracy” (Gopnik, 2016) because his idea of a liberal democratic nation means that one cannot impose upon others the values that are not in their interest. India has celebrated being a democratic nation for nearly seventy years and it has come a long way, but some of the outdated traditional practices of religions obligate the nation to accommodate inhuman practices like caste distinctions, gender inequality and the systematic denial of government assistance to some people. The nature of culture and civilization in India has always been pluralistic, but the present majority’s dominance threatens the essence of its pluralistic nature. This dominance becomes an obstacle to entertaining different viewpoints of all the citizens, so free and fair deliberation becomes questionable.

A democratic setup must enable everyone to participate in building a better human society. It should encourage every individual to participate in making decisions without discriminating between the majority and the minority. A democratic arrangement should be open to deliberate various perspectives so that every person can make a decision for him/herself and for society as a whole without any discrimination or bias. When individuals do not have the freedom to participate in public deliberation then the individuals cannot “prevent various ills from happening to them” (Pettit, 1997, p. 69), and it becomes impossible for those individuals to have rights as human beings. Just having a democratic setup alone does not help a nation, but only if the democratic setup embraces the spirit of value pluralism which allows individuals to pursue ends of their choice.
Deliberation is an essential skill which emerges from the very essence of human freedom and it can be a uniting factor in a pluralistic society like India. Reasonable deliberation can help a nation to grow further and it should be handled with the spirit of pluralism. Deliberation enables individuals to exercise their negative liberty in order to defend their human dignity. Every individual can practice his/her freedom of thought through deliberation only when a society respects the pluralistic roots of human nature, as Berlin reasoned. In a pluralistic society, deliberation can end in deep compromises, “democratic deliberation essentially depends on our willingness to reason toward deep compromises, in which individuals modify their ends in response to and on account of considerations that have been put forward by others” (Richardson, 2002, p. 90). As Berlin emphasizes, human life is inescapably tragic because one has to constantly make decisions. Such decisions are made through deliberation based upon the deep compromises and the values which makes one’s life rich and deep (Gopnik, 2016). Deliberations are not just dialogues about the common good, but they “change one’s practical commitments” in a pluralistic society (Richardson, 2002, p. 90). In a large society like India, everyone might wish that his/her preferences be implemented for the common good, but with the plurality of religion, caste and language ultimately one has to compromise for the common good. In a democratic environment then, “deliberation is essentially concerned with what to do, and is in that sense practical reasoning,” (Richardson, 1994, p. 60). It is concerned with what will work, given the plurality of the society and how the individuals can continue to be free in those circumstances. In a democratic atmosphere, deliberation helps individuals to exercise their reasoning for both the common good and their own interests. Deliberation is mostly possible in a democratic atmosphere where plurality is acknowledged as a way of life. Building a society based upon deliberation can improve the pluralistic environment and it promotes human dignity. Such
benefits can exist only in democratic countries where Berlin's value pluralism and his understanding of human freedom are taken into account.

According to Berlin, the essence of being human is freedom, but such freedom cannot be attained by individuals until a society adopts and promotes value pluralism. Berlin's value pluralism is really an urgent need for India's democracy because it can establish the deeper value of democracy by upholding principles of social justice, human rights and liberty. Value pluralism helps to realize the various social inclinations which could make collaboration possible, despite diversity. Besides, it also helps facilitate co-operation in the face of disagreements. Gopnik states:

Isaiah Berlin argued for "value pluralism" contra both Mill and Kant. We have a multiplicity of diverse ethical values and those values are often simply incompatible. There is no way to measure or weigh them against one another, no single value that trumps the others. Justice or mercy, altruism or autonomy, what Yeats called "perfection of the life or of the work"- these values can't simply be weighed in some single objective scale. They can't be measured against each other in a way that reveals the single best thing to do. And yet often, in real life, we have to choose between them. (2016)

Mill's utilitarianism aims at making decisions based upon "the greatest good for the greatest number." Kant's "deontology" instructs one to follow absolute and universal moral principles. In contrast, Berlin's understanding of value pluralism seeks a humanistic approach by which human beings cannot be forced into a "cut-and-dried" formula, but are constantly under pressure to choose the values that best fit their time and needs. Any political structure should strive to promote human freedom so that the very essence of being human is not diminished in any way. According to Berlin, not only a state but also state officials have the responsibility to promote and safeguard individual liberty. A government can do justice only when it promotes human liberty and understands the pluralistic nature of human beings.

5.2.2 Practical Wisdom of Statesperson

A political structure promotes individual liberty to the extent that it helps one to be a human person. As freedom has both external and internal aspects, to secure the latter, the
policies of government have to be implemented without adverse consequences to the former. The former includes negative liberty and the latter positive freedom. In attempting to secure a balance between both of these liberties, it is apparent that individual freedom is limited. But how far does this balance go, and what are the limits of government interference that need to be delineated? Can the ideal of India’s democracy be content with providing options and opportunities for negative freedom by constitutional safeguards, the bill of rights and civil liberties enshrined in the constitution? In a multi-cultural context and in view of a pluralistic society, governmental policies must protect diverse secular and cultural traditions. While many opportunities may be present, freedom sometimes depends upon internal constraint while a person decides whether they are able to follow a particular opportunity. While a government can present various options which would not have been available otherwise, the internal aspect of freedom is always still in question. Miller offers a solution to such constraints of the internal kind. He states:

How can one promote the inner freedom, the capacity to make genuine choices? One way is to expose people to a wide range of alternatives, so that they are less likely to take for granted, one set of beliefs or one way of life to be the right one. So a government that wanted to promote freedom to choose could do so by encouraging social diversity, by exposing people to new ways of living, new forms of culture and so on. (2003, p. 72)

The ideal government needs to frame policies which in fact increase freedom by offering multiple options. The declaration that India is a liberal democratic state would be reduced to nothing but words on paper if the government did not promote an awareness of its policies. Any state that wants to promote freedom has to encourage social diversity and not interfere with the different ways of living. Berlin would acknowledge that such efforts are the path to freedom and pluralism.

Beetham remarks, “India provides an outstanding example of a country internally divided by religion, caste, language and region which has nevertheless maintained a democratic government for over fifty years” (2006, p. 89). A specific reason he cites rests
with the citizens themselves, “People are capable of developing multi-level loyalties to religion, region, ethnic or linguistic community, as well as the nation as a whole. It is possible to sustain different entities without treating anyone as exclusive of others (Beetham, 2006, p. 90). As Berlin observes “Self-government may on the whole provide a better guarantee of civil liberties than other regimes, and has been defended as such by libertarians” (2002, p. 177). He notes the connection between democracy and individual liberty is more tenuous than it seemed to many advocates of both (1969, pp. 177-78). As he asserts, “Liberty is increased when sovereignty is placed in the right hands” (1969, pp. 162-63). For him, the ‘right hands’ means a person who stands for the protection of cultural diversity and personal freedom.

People need to have freedom so that they can recognize their worth and live as human beings. Berlin advises that “the governments should be modest in being aggressive with their positive goals that they want to impose on the citizens and should always guarantee a certain area of non-interference” (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 25). A government can use positive goals for its citizens to pursue in the fields of education, medical help, cleanliness, environment protection. It also can use the positive goals for the unity and harmony of the state.

Since a political institution has an overriding role in its people’s lives, its ideals should promote values of unity and harmony, its operation be directed to promote human flourishing. As a statesman, Radhakrishnan was committed to such basic values of political institutions. He says:

Even the derelicts of humanity drifting about in the backwaters of civilization, the underworld of criminals and outcasts, each has its own self, inside him, his own peculiar interests and talents. Though their nature may be baffling, chance and opportunity may bring out the best in them. It is the function of the state to see that the light of human recognition in men’s eyes do not grow dim. (1947, p. 60)

A political system cannot alienate itself from the social and moral dimensions of a pluralistic state. Schmitt would not link political matters to this dichotomy, which is regarded as connected to other concerns. The political is ultimately, then, a question of life or death, a
question that presupposes the existence of an enemy—an enemy comprehended independent of other antitheses (e.g., the moral antitheses of good vs evil) and with conceptually autonomous categories of thought (O’Meara, 2010).

Radhakrishnan emphasizes the rational and moral order of the state and opposes those who hold there is no permanent ideal for human behavior, freedom of thought, humanitarianism … We must only make shrewd compromises according to our interests or those of our groups; every national community or every class in a community is absolutely entitled to, and justified in, applying that standard of morality which it thinks is for its best interest. (Ray, 1960, pp. 20-21)

Such critical reflections show that the broader outlook of a statesman is necessary in order to realize the significance and protection of diversity. The world, being international today, cannot support a political structure that is less than thoroughly national in spirit. However, nationalism can put a nation’s pluralism at risk and it may lead a community to build a wall around itself. Nationalism may also distract people from understanding the humanness in other human beings.

The movement of nationalism in India was born during the colonial era and was strengthened by the freedom fighters. Present-day India has witnessed the sudden rise of nationalism in different directions. These movements have had a huge influence on the politics of the country and caused ethnic, social and religious conflicts within its society. Today, India’s nationalism is closely connected to religion. The nation is divided in terms of linguistics, social traditions and religious practices. Hinduism, the religion of the majority, has played a major role in reshaping the customs and cultural practices of the nation. It is known for its acceptance of plurality and tolerance, but at present the pluralistic nature of Hinduism is in jeopardy because the nationalist movement has been trying to use it as Hindutva, a source for uniting the nation. This kind of movement has brought new antagonisms to what had been a nation of agonistic pluralistic values. The people who initiated this movement lack “sympathetic empathy” because they fail to understand that
nationalism does not impose one particular religion or custom. The true sense of nationalism must aim at the well-being of every individual rather than embracing only one particular religion and its cultural practices.

Empathetic understanding occurs when everyone has equal respect for others’ religions and customs. India’s motto is *sarva dharma samana bhav* (‘all religions have equal respect’) which connotes acceptance of diverse cultural values. This assumes that the citizens of India find ways to retain value pluralism and end conflicts, if only as a temporary measure. One can admire or criticize others’ viewpoints as one attempts to understand the country’s multiculturalism. While it is not possible to completely remove the clash of values that are inherently different, solutions to the survival of key values necessary for mankind are possible. Human beings can rise above conflicts in a fruitful manner because we possess the unique capability to understand others’ values and cultures. Berlin’s notion of sympathetic understanding can help overcome not only cultural and religious issues, but also any disagreement regarding nationalism, which has deeper implications for human freedom.

### 5.2.3 Understanding Others

Berlin adopted Vico’s notion of “fantasia” and Herder’s “sympathetic empathy or an active movement that goes deeper inside oneself and others” (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 121) to overcome conflicts in any society, be they cultural, religious or class-based. Even though at times cultural values are incompatible with each other, one can still understand others’ values by making the effort to do so. For Berlin, the essence of being human is to understand others’ differences while recognizing that they are human like us, even though they might have different beliefs or ways of life.

Today, many parts of the world continue to treat some individuals as less than human because of political and economic greed. The weaker part of the population is kept outside of the political system because they lack the means to obtain basic human rights. The greed for
wealth has changed the perception of people today and has led to the rampant degradation of humanity in some places. A nation like India is not excluded from globalization and striving for a more powerful place in the international community. In India, globalization has had an increasing impact on the country’s socio-political life. Besides the effects of globalization, there is also the nationalist movement, which has created new antagonisms within India’s pluralistic society by questioning the very notion of tolerance, an essential component of Indian society for many years.

Berlin’s notion of inter-communication has important implications for the modern Indian context where many fail to understand the marginalized. It is important to understand the pain of the weak and marginalized because they are human beings like everyone else. In a democratic society one should not be humiliated or mistreated because of one’s social background. When one exercises “imaginative insight” (fantasia) to understand others’ pain and humiliation, then such biased treatment might not take place in the society. Berlin’s philosophy not only helps to understand the very nature of human beings, but it also suggests the importance of having empathy for others.

In the present time, being human means that one needs to understand the plurality of human nature. Furthermore, one must understand the contradictions and the differences that are present in a multicultural society like India. Trying to impose uniformity, whether in language, religions, customs, food habits or any other area, can deeply harm the country and also degrade the very notion of human freedom. India has long been a nation of diversity and plurality and this can be never considered a weakness because it represents the goodness of human plurality in every way. “Imaginative insight” would help everyone to understand the goodness of the nation and also to appreciate the plurality of human nature.
5.3 Context-Specific Solutions

Berlin’s theory concerning choice-making is applied at the context-oriented level, where no conflict-free permanent solution is possible. There exists no perfect society in which all ends can be combined into one harmonious whole. As Berlin states, “The notion of total human fulfillment is a formal contradiction, a metaphysical chimera” (2013b, p. 213). All choices are made at a given time and place, depending upon situations and the pressing demands of that society. One must allow for the genuine needs of such choices. Limiting the matter to context-based issues, Berlin’s ideas relate well to a well-established pluralistic society such as India’s.

The defense of value pluralism is evident in Berlin’s works, although he does not link it to liberalism as a political theory. An attempt has been made, however, to show it is not inconsistent with a liberal policy. In fact, Berlin’s view extends to a defense of liberal society and his account of value pluralism seeks the basis for its stability in liberal political structures. It is a way designed to diminish the sacrifice or suffering connected to conflicts of rival values. Berlin therefore claims:

The way out must therefore lie in some logically, untidy, flexible and even ambiguous compromise. Every situation calls for its own specific policy since ‘out of the crooked timber of humanity’, as Kant once remarked ‘no straight thing was ever made’ (2013c, p. 92).

As all values are significant, one cannot point to the superiority of one over another as the means to decide. The way to handle diversity, multiculturalism and value conflict is a larger question in Berlin’s thought, which needs further attention. He combines value pluralism with a certain view of human nature. The characteristics of human nature are varied but one is a positive belief in humans’ ability and potential to solve humanity’s problems (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 2). The significance and characteristics of human nature and the extent to which it provides ways to diffuse conflicts in values is brought out in many of his writings.
Berlin’s value pluralism and the doors open to the reconciliation of diverse and incommensurable perspectives show the need to find a solution to conflict for which there is no ultimate principle to rely upon. A pluralistic society such as India’s cannot be devoid of conflicts in many forms. Berlin states:

Pluralism with the measure of ‘negative liberty, it entails seem to me a truer and more humane ideal than the goals of those who seek in the great, disciplined, authoritarian structures the idea; or ‘self-mastery’ of the classes, of peoples, or the whole of mankind. It is truer, because it does, at least recognize the fact that human goals are many, not all of them commensurable, and in perpetual rivalry with one another. To assume all value can be graded on one scale, so that it is a mere matter of inspection to determine the highest, seems to me to falsify our knowledge that men are free agents, to represent moral decision as an operation which a slide-rule could, in principle, perform. (2013b, p. 216)

There is no superior principle which one can fall back upon to make decisions. Berlin provided a corollary to this when he stated metaphorically that human beings cannot be squeezed into “cut-and-dried” formulae (2013b, p. 238) or “into the neat uniforms demanded by dogmatically believed-in schemes” (1997, p. 15). However, persons do draw upon certain ethical injunctions as significant principles and do not reach decisions easily. Inasmuch as one is part of the moral world with its ethical dimensions, in every dilemma one has to choose among values. In the Berlinian analysis, the following statement has a bearing on this issue;

Indeed, I have tried to show that it is the notion of freedom in the ‘positive’ sense that is at the heart of the demands for national or social self-direction which animate the powerful and morally just public movements of our time, and that not to recognize this is to misunderstand the most vital facts and ideas of our age. But equally it seems to me that the belief that some single formula can in principle be found is demonstrably false. (Berlin, 2013b, p. 214)

There is certainly no ultimate over-reaching principle to which a person can appeal to when they must judge. The decision one takes and abides by is contextual, for which certain justifications are present. For Burke, “Man acts from adequate motives relative to his interest,
and not on metaphysical speculations” (cited in O'Gorman, 2004, p.78). Human beings act according to their interest which are deeply influenced by cultural situations.

Bhargava claims “In conflicting human situations, multi-value doctrines are better fitting, as they take into consideration the conflicts in question and their related context. They do not apply any a priori procedure to end such conflicts” (1998, p. 299). This opens the possibility to compromise, to reconcile and forge a better understanding among several groups, since one is not perceived to dominate over the others’ viewpoints. Bhargava summarizes this attitudinal stance by stating:

Secularism in India is not understood to be a mechanical doctrine with uniform technical application. If secularism embodies contextual reasoning, it must be understood that this is not private moral reasoning applied to politics but rather public-political reasoning infused with a moral character. (1998, pp. 300-301)

In the Indian context, this idea of a moral anchor, of the common nature of persons, of the need to harmonize values with the pressing needs of everyone is dharma. Dharma provides guidelines for context-specific decisions as well as for the consolidation of morals recognized by humanity. Berlin pointed out certain needs which must be met by the political authority to make judgments with wisdom, an intuitive perception of the best course to take in a particular situation. This offers a way out of cultural or national dilemmas.

In Indian society dharma, as an ethical code, does admit flexibility. The fact the religious canon posits an ultimate soteriological aim does not enter into the decisions taken. These decisions are related to the contexts of one’s life in this world. Dharma is basically related to ethical behavior in particular circumstances. As Malhotra states, “Indian pluralism was always based on the absence of a single absolute code applicable to all” (2013, p. 194). A person cannot neglect any specific duty that applies to one’s svadharma. Despite one’s commitment to the responsibilities of a worldly life with worldly pursuits, one must abide by dharmic norms. One cannot shun any of one’s obligations, nor refrain from moral decisions.
As Radhakrishnan states about Indian democracy, “In our national concerns, we adopt democracy not merely as a political arrangement but as a moral temper. It is of a piece with our great tradition and habits of behavior” (1947, p. 42).

_Dharmic_ regulations and traditional patterns are devoted not only to the self-transformation of human nature by helping people follow moral codes, but also with the ideals of multiculturalism. The political framework needs to keep this parameter as a priority. As Radhakrishnan affirmed, “We must create the temper of mind to use the machinery circumspectly. We must cultivate democracy as a state of mind” (1947, p. 100). In a pluralistic society such as India’s, many human needs must be met, so positive liberty assumes more prominence in highlighting conditions of poverty, inequality and injustice.

Although Radhakrishnan would contend that freedom is a prized possession, he is emphatic in saying “The freedom which human beings desire is not the unreal negative absence of restraint, but the real positive freedom to use to the full one’s natural endowments of physique and brains” (1947, p. 100). Positive liberty assumes a worthy place in the democratic view. Berlin upheld the freedom to choose between values by stating:

>In the end, men choose between ultimate values; they choose to do so because their life and thought are determined by fundamental moral categories and concepts that are as much a part of their own being and conscious thought and sense of their identity as their physical structure. (2013a, p. 53)

Berlin’s value pluralism does not refer to some higher order such as sacred revelation or the authority of religious texts. Its notable feature from the Indian perspective is its reference to values rooted in a transcendental order beyond particular contexts, yet providing universal guidelines of absolute principles. People are aware of varied perspectives, the relative and the absolute. Irudhyadhasan contends “The context sensitive secularism of India not only refers to the variation of the form and content of secularism from context to context, but it entails a paradigm of contextual moral reasoning” (2013, p. 51). Although religious communities for
the most part live harmoniously together, they are never devoid of value conflicts. In such cases, a sympathetic understanding of each other's rival claims is needed to maintain peace.

5.4 Value Pluralism through Philosophy and Multicultural Education

Berlin holds that human beings are endowed with basic moral categories which have an objective nature (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 133) “thus they still understand themselves as discoverers and not as creators of values” (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 142). These basic moral categories can be considered permanent, universal and common to all human beings regardless of differing cultural and religious beliefs. Besides these categories, there are semi-permanent moral categories which are less stable and universal than the permanent ones (Berlin, 1999c, p. 165). MacKenzie states “The ‘semi-permanency’ of moral category spectacles—by accepting that they change in different historical and cultural contexts—still entails a commitment to the truth of value-pluralism” (MacKenzie, 1999, p. 337). He contends that these categories exist *a priori* which order moral experience, and these moral categories such as fairness, justice, rights and so on elicit a moral response. Of these categories, Berlin states, are “nothing as firm as those of say the material world, but neither are they as fluid some writers... have tended to assume” (2000, p. 25). Human beings can understand others’ pains and sufferings because we all share the same basic moral categories regardless of different cultural and religious practices. Even though Berlin describes human nature as “crooked timber,” he still finds goodness in human beings. That is, we are tolerant and have the ability to overcome conflicts because of our capacity as moral agents. This capacity to be a moral agent can be enhanced through the study of philosophy and by a multicultural education.

People must make choices to overcome moral dilemmas, provided they have the freedom to act as a human being. Berlin treats freedom as a network of basic moral categories because they give humans the power to choose between values. In fact, he equates personal
freedom with the very essence of human nature. He upholds the freedom to choose between values by saying,

In the end, men choose between ultimate values; they choose as they do because their life and thought are determined by fundamental moral categories and concepts that are, at any rate, over large stretches of time and space, and whatever their ultimate origins, a part of their being and thought and sense of their own identity; part of what makes them human. (2002, p. 217)

As all values have individual importance, decision-making in conflicting instances cannot have any hard and fast rule that will settle the issue. The point is that there are common moral categories present to all humanity. During World War II, the Nazis dehumanized the Jews by depriving them of their “capacity for freedom not only their personalities and self-respect ... but also their reasons for living” (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 144). Even though every human being is endowed with basic morality, some act normal and others act like savage idiots. For Berlin, a normal person feels moral revulsion (2002, p. 211) when one sees basic moral laws broken in a society. A moral idiot does not comply with basic morality, but “acts under the influence of ‘wrong’ concepts and categories” (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 160). Human beings have the ability to think critically and avoid unnecessary suffering and evil that may be happening in the world: For Berlin, philosophy plays a major role in helping human beings reflect upon right concepts and categories. In his essay “The Purpose of Philosophy” (1962) Berlin offers hope as in the following:

If there is to be any hope of a rational order on earth, or of a just appreciation of the many various interests that divide diverse groups of human beings - knowledge that is indispensable to any attempt to assess their effects, and the patterns of their interplay and its consequences, in order to find viable compromises through which men may continue to live and satisfy their desires without thereby crushing the equally central desires and needs of others - it lies in the bringing to light of these models, social, moral, political, and above all the underlying metaphysical patterns in which they are rooted, with a view to examining whether they are adequate to their task. (Berlin, 1999a, pp. 10-11)

His description of hope shows the important role of philosophy which supports an appreciation of the plurality in human nature. The aim of philosophy should be “to assist men
to understand themselves and thus operate in the open, and not wildly, in the dark” (Berlin, 1999a, p. 11). The study of philosophy can lead an individual to understand his/her nature and embrace the plurality in all of reality. Thus philosophers have an important role in helping humankind diagnose stereotyped ways of thinking. They must offer a solution to overcome the domination of political monism and help individuals realize the plurality in human nature. Philosophy should help one to think critically and independently, to liberate oneself from prejudice, cultural and religious superstitions.

India’s history shows that its ancient heritage is deeply rational and plural. The plurality can be found in the existence of various religions. Some of the most well-known religions of the world, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, originated in India, while others like Christianity, Islam, Jewish and Zoroastrianism came from elsewhere but have grown and still remain in India for nearly 2,000 years. Besides these religions, a good many individuals are atheist or agnostic. “Given these multitude diversity, the nation faces many conflicts which are mostly based on language, religion and caste” (Pereira & Malik, 2015, p. 174). The common sources of division and conflict occur due to language, religion and caste issues.

Sen states that pluralism is found even within Hinduism itself. It might seem like a single religion, but its structures are plural and diverse. Its divisions are found in its caste systems and the various schools of thought. It has six systems of philosophy which are highly diverse in its reasoning and beliefs (1993a, p. 7). The current nationalism movement pays no attention to these rationalist traditions and does not accept that the nation is “an integrally pluralist country, made up of different religious beliefs, distinct language groups, divergent social practices” (Sen, 1993a, p.6).

From a socio-political perspective, the plurality that exists in India is very complex because it has an ancient cultural heritage and longstanding ethnic, religious and regional
conflicts. So it is important for India to encourage and support the collective participation of its citizens, regardless of their differences. A liberal education with critical thinking can teach people to think, critique, rationalize and come to conclusions that assist them and others without prejudice, cultural and religious superstition. In a pluralistic community, it is important that everyone understand the larger idea of heterogeneous identity. According to Sen, obscurantism can flourish due to educational backwardness and gullibility (1993a, p. 20). Such backwardness and gullibility can be overcome only through literacy, along with some moral education. The widespread problem of illiteracy needs to be addressed by some basic education; also, the content of education given to the children needs to be authentic. Exposing children to distorted versions of India’s history can harm rather than help the pluralism and multiculturalism of the nation. Presently, politically powerful groups have been backing a considerable revision of Indian history in order to carry out their political agenda to unify the nation with one religion and one language. According to Berlin, human beings are not pathologically mad or innately evil, but they can become evil or harm others “due to indoctrination with a perverted ideology. Misguided human beings, however, can be changed into tolerant liberal democrats” (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 168). Berlin believes that people can change and improve when they are taught correct concepts and categories.

An educational system must enable individuals to overcome cultural bias, prejudice, and religious superstition and choose what is right for humanity as a whole. It should help people to loosen their own cultural perceptions and understand others from an insider’s view. According to Burtonwood, “Multicultural education aids this critical reflection by allowing individuals the opportunity to step back from their own way of life and to see it as one among several possibilities” (2006, p.96). Michael Merry suggests that the schools should include cultural coherence as part of the curriculum so that children might develop open-mindedness and be able to see the world with a new perception rather than just that of their parents.
(Burtonwood, 2006, p. 130). Ultimately, education should bring every person to autonomy in thinking and perceiving the universe.

Multicultural education can be beneficial to India’s understanding of its roots and to different ways of life and customs. One needs to understand that conflicts can be managed peacefully by accommodating competing values (Burtonwood, 2006, p. 58). Some values are incompatible so there is no point in always searching for a ‘right truth’ in the transcendent world. People need to learn to negotiate and make choices different from what one has.

Human beings’ continual desire for a utopian society creates the illusion that there is some objective equality and perfection. For Berlin, such desire is a tragedy. Through multicultural education, however, we can achieve a less brutal and less irrational world, because human nature is such that there can be no absolute perfection or equality in the world as it is.

India is a naturally pluralistic country made up of different social customs, different religious traditions, and distinct language groups. This pluralistic identity has been strengthened by the arrival of secularism and liberal democracy. The nation has a long heritage of philosophical, spiritual and historical legacy. A genuine educational system can help India’s citizens to recognize these multicultural and pluralist characteristics of the nation and fight against the nationalism movement that misrepresents India’s past and becomes an obstacle to its peaceful future. Sen illuminates that

[The] nationalism … ignores the rationalist traditions of India, a country in which some of the earliest steps in algebra, geometry, and astronomy were taken, where the decimal system emerged, where early philosophy-secular as well as religious achieved exceptional sophistication, where people invented games like chess, pioneered sex education, and began the first systematic study of political economy. (1993a, p.21)

The nation of India has a distinctive history and pluralistic heritage. It cannot be left an intellectually bankrupt and barbarous place by accepting nationalistic movements which do not clearly recognize the pluralistic heritage of the nation. The authentic essence of the nation is pluralistic and has long been protected. Berlin’s philosophy warns about the harmful
consequences of rejecting pluralism and asserts that the only way human beings can continue to live a peaceful life is through accepting the plurality that exists. Tharoor holds that “the twenty-first century world is one in which an emphasis on the shared values of ... democracy and pluralism, tolerance and transparency, and respect for personal liberty and human rights has greater salience than ever” (2013).

India is a land of plurality and diversity which needs secularism and democracy for its survival. The nation has been held back due to some of its outdated cultural practices and policies, and it continues to suffer from poverty and various social evils, most of which are deeply connected to religions, caste and customs. The nation must make an effort to face these challenges with greater honesty and courage in order to ensure that its citizens have freedom of choice. For Berlin, “without the power of choice persons cannot be called human beings” (Aarsbergen-Ligtvoet, 2006, p. 189). Definitely Berlin’s views on value pluralism and liberty can help India re-examine its nationalist aim and instead embrace diversity and pluralism for a better future.

5.5 Recommendations

Berlin’s philosophy of value pluralism and liberty is a real need for modern society to build a peaceful place for humankind, where freedom and multiple ends can flourish. Such an atmosphere can be built through constant efforts to promote the plurality of society. The researcher presents a few suggestions that could help India’s society to promote value pluralism and liberty for the sake of preserving its pluralistic origin. Here are the suggestions:

1. Since the ultimate aim of democracy is to accommodate different perspectives in a deliberative setting, it is essential that the government create an atmosphere where citizens are free and fearless about presenting their plural views. Such promotions can help the nation
to understand the opinions of individuals from various backgrounds regardless of their caste, creed and culture.

2. It is important for students to develop critical thinking in order to challenge the values that are not based upon human dignity. In order to promote better values, there have to be new teaching methods. The new curricula should be based upon a ‘multicultural liberal education’ that includes the study of philosophy, literature, history and arts. These disciplines might help students to understand the plurality of human ends, to appreciate and respect others’ cultural views and to be aware of the diversity and plurality that exist in every society including India itself. It is important that a child should understand other cultures, not only from his/her own perspective, but also from an insider’s point of view.

3. In recent years there has been a drive to manipulate and distort historical studies. Such drives are reflected in school curricula which can deeply influence the minds of children and thus the future of the nation. The history of India should be presented with truth and sincerity because it expresses the deep values of the nation, which include being plural. The contrary harmful drive should be stopped soon and a true version of the country’s history be taught in all schools.

4. The nation has long been suffering from divisions and distinctions based upon caste, creed and cultures; besides these, there is also the promotion of fascist nationalism by some fundamentalist groups. The nation’s constitution stands for protecting pluralism and liberty, which should be respected by all. The nationalist movement can damage India’s freedom and democracy. If the nation wants a better future, nationalism is not the right choice. Instead, the nation should promote freedom by engaging in open debates about issues like nationalism, etc. Movements such as nationalism and fundamentalism can become obstacles to value pluralism because they do not believe in compromise and trade-offs between the country’s
religions and cultures. Eventually these movements resort to violent means to impose their will, rather than being tolerant and considering the pluralistic nature of the nation.

5. There have been efforts to use “positive liberty” to ban some journalists, student activities, and scholarship in the name of nationalism, but a liberal democratic nation should find a suitable way to handle this issue, rather than stopping those who are challenging authorities on behalf of ordinary people’s rights. “Positive liberty” should be used to build society in a positive way. Individuals should have the opportunity to fight social evils rather than simply become victims of those social evils.

6. A large democratic nation like India can advance the cause of positive liberty for the welfare of its people. At the same time, the nation must safeguard individuals’ rights to create an environment where each citizen can still enjoy his/her negative liberty. So there must be an effort through dialogue to balance and promote the liberty of the individuals.

7. A good government should not seek perfection by reducing the negative freedom of the people, nor should it impose any particular method on the people, but should allow the citizens freedom to pursue the religion, language and culture of their choice. It should never force individuals into a fixed pattern of behavior. Everyone needs freedom of choice and at least some degree of negative freedom to have options when making choices.

8. A nation and its citizens need to embrace diversity and pluralism, which the government must promote through various programs. India’s pluralism is not a modern or a contemporary occurrence, but has been the essence of the nation from its origin. Having a historical awareness about the nation could help overcome social and religious conflicts, so it is important to promote knowledge of the nation’s history.

The goodness and the heritage of the nation can be found in all the country’s regional and minority languages, so recognizing and upholding this diversity is an important component of the nation’s peaceful future.
5.6 Conclusion

Berlin’s notion of liberty, value pluralism and human nature provide an analysis which can help understand pluralism in the Indian context. The solutions to value conflicts which Berlin highlights depend upon context-specific criteria, combined with the prudence of the statesperson, both of which can help protect India’s pluralism. His political philosophy helps to understand how humanity has suffered from political monism which can end in human misery. Human beings cannot be expected to function in a fixed pattern of life. We are pluralistic in our very essence, a fact which is deeply connected to liberty. People can be fuller human beings only when they have the freedom to attain their preferred end without the unnecessary interference of others.

So according to Berlin, human beings must make an effort to appreciate others as oneself, regardless of their different beliefs, customs and languages. Human beings’ lives can be understood well only through the lens of value pluralism and liberty. Therefore, human diversity should be considered a common phenomenon, and it should be supported at all cost in order to reduce the sufferings of one’s fellow human beings. Berlin’s views of value pluralism and liberty clearly indicate the real human essence, and his ideas require the courage to challenge existing social affairs and struggles to make all societies better places.

The current political situation in India has called attention to two issues which have been present for many decades. These issues are related to diversity and nationalism. Diversity is one of the country’s admirable traits, but some claim that diversity leads to a division of national unity and Indian identity. So there have been efforts to reduce the diversity of the nation for the sake of national unity and nationalism. Berlin’s philosophy maintains that such efforts end in human wretchedness. It is important for the nation to honor its origin and embrace its diversity. Berlin’s philosophy helps one to understand that unity
within diversity is not an easy task, but harmony within diversity is possible. The search for harmony within diversity should be the ultimate aim of any liberal democratic nation.

After gaining independence in 1947, the nation embraced democracy which has been a success story, yet some contemporary political developments threaten the future of India’s democracy and its pluralistic nature due to its treatment of minorities. Many social crusaders and political scholars oppose such a ‘majority rules’ trend, but obviously India needs to find the way to educate its people to understand the value of democracy and its secular ideals.

Berlin’s philosophy demonstrates how a respect for pluralism can be maintained in the face of a majority’s tyranny. Berlin’s notion of value pluralism and freedom can help India to overcome the demarcation between majority and minority. Berlin’s notion of value pluralism can help India to re-examine the majority’s tyranny and embrace the diversity and pluralism for a better future.

In recent years, the nation has integrated well with West-inspired modernities such as technology, the field of scientific studies, medicine and so on. This has been welcomed by everyone, even the fundamentalists. Such modernity, however, has not included dealing with cultural, religious and political conflicts. The effort to assimilate some modern outlooks in our cultural, religious and political conflicts might help the nation find ways to achieve harmony within diversity. Obviously Berlin’s philosophy can help the nation distinguish which aspects of modernity should be embraced and which should be rejected. In fact, the Declaration of Rights in the Indian Constitution functions as a safeguard by defining the extent of the government’s authority so that it does not encroach upon individual liberties. Unfortunately, the backwardness of a few religious fundamentalist groups and their lack of effort to understand the Constitution have caused them to reject and disobey its principles. The Indian government must defend the rights of all individuals and enforce the authority of the Constitution.
Here are a few conclusions that the researcher would like to offer. Even though some of Berlin's ideas may not be fully applicable to India, they still possess enough relevance to help the nation avoid unnecessary human misery. Here are the ideas of Berlin which might lead the nation to a modern perspective about value pluralism and liberty.

It is important to find ways to reduce the tensions that exist between negative and positive liberty, because both are needed for the development of human beings. Having negative freedom alone will not solve all the problems of individuals, but may have drastic consequences. Positive liberty also plays a vital role in building up a state when it is used properly by the statesmen. It can safeguard the poor and underprivileged from the powerful, and at the same it can reach the mainstream of society. Berlin emphasizes the importance of negative liberty because he believes it can support and strengthen value pluralism, but he also expresses his concern for the unrestricted liberty of the powerful which can harm the weak and less gifted. Value pluralism can strengthen negative liberty, but positive liberty plays a critical role in larger societies which need the authorities to control religious and cultural monopolies. Value pluralism underlines the importance of every individual in a society, regardless of who he/she is. The peaceful future of human societies largely depends upon the peaceful embracing of value pluralism.

A large society like India's should make continual efforts to preserve its multicultural heritage through a multicultural educational system which teaches young citizens to treat everyone with respect and human dignity. Berlin's philosophy is holistic, which promotes human dignity through value pluralism and liberty. All human beings need a certain level of freedom so that they can pursue their pluralistic ends with dignity.

Berlin's philosophy of value pluralism shows how to preserve the traditional pluralistic values of a democratic nation even in the face of protectionism and the changing global narrative, because his notion of value pluralism is compatible with both modern
democratic norms and traditional values. The basic notion of value pluralism is that it appreciates individuals for who they are and where they are, regardless of their adherence to a particular faith or customs. The essential aspect of value pluralism is human dignity and human freedom. People should be treated with dignity regardless of their economic or social background and should enjoy a free environment in which to choose their own ends.

Berlin understands that the solutions to social conflicts can differ, depending upon the situation within each particular society. There can be no universal solution for the social conflicts that the world is facing today. Each solution must be based upon the context-specific situation, which leads to a social consensus through social deliberation. Berlin does not think that wars, coercion and military actions should be used as a means to achieve perfection in a society. In fact, a society should not aim at perfection by forcing people to follow a single pattern of life, but can aim at harmony by promoting awareness and tolerance of differing opinions, cultures and religions.

Berlin’s value pluralism holds that there are an indeterminate number of human values which are incommensurable and irreconcilable. There is no point in seeking a standard criterion to measure these values, but many human problems could be solved by simply acknowledging that human values and ends are many. It is important to recognize others’ values as they are, rather than comparing them to one’s own values. All values are created by human beings and another’s are no less important to that individual. The plurality of values indicates that human beings inherently value different things, an undeniable fact.

Liberty is an important attribute of being human. Without liberty, human beings cannot fully function as persons. There are times when a society might have to curtail some freedoms in order to make room for security, education, health and so on. In that sense, curtailing some freedoms today may lead to a better future. However, the curtailing of an individual’s freedom should be done without coercion. It is important for an individual to
enjoy some space to realize his/her worth as a human being. Every society should acknowledge what liberty is and find ways to help its members live in dignity.

Berlin’s value pluralism recognizes that human beings possess common fundamental values, regardless of their differences in religion, culture, region, and race. These common values remind us that differences do not reduce the essence of being human. So it is important for every society to promote cultural awareness so that the worth of being human does not depend solely upon the external features or material aspects of life. Society should keep investing in the development of its human resources and assist its weaker and marginalized members. The poor and marginalized continue to suffer in many parts of the world because their rights as human beings are denied by systematic social oppression. Berlin’s value pluralism can overcome these social evils because it helps societies to recognize the human worth of all its citizens, no matter how disadvantaged.

Embracing value pluralism and a balanced positive and negative freedom can help a nation to move constructively towards improving the state of affairs of its people. A balanced positive and negative freedom helps to create appropriate limits to the freedom of individuals in a society. It is important for a society to protect itself by restraining harmful individuals. Having too much positive freedom or negative freedom can lead to unnecessary human suffering. A society must decide upon a balanced view of freedom, depending upon its social situation and the interest of its peace. Value pluralism does not aim at violence but looks for peace. Having peace and freedom can help people focus on development, and reduce the poverty and suffering of the poor and unfortunate people of a nation.

Berlin’s value pluralism evolves through ‘historical consciousness.’ He believed that the study of history helps to understand the existence of a multiplicity of values in the world. Even though values are plural, our ‘historical consciousness’ is universal and it can be genuinely helpful to those who make empathetic efforts to understand others. The study of
history offers a unique perspective of humankind, compared to science, because human nature cannot be studied by a systematic method. That is why Berlin finds that context-based solutions are the best way for human beings to overcome their conflicts.

Berlin believed that a good ruler can help a society progress in a right direction. The ruler and the government should avoid violating civil liberty and civil rights. On the contrary, the government should uphold human rights because they take precedence over outdated cultural and religious practices. There must be a political strategy for supporting human rights so that a society can help its plurality exist in harmony. Berlin’s philosophy stresses the importance of a plurality of values, but it would oppose any values that degrade human beings.

Berlin attempts to defend pluralism and liberalism based upon the importance of human dignity and freedom. Therefore, he opposes coercion, the limiting of the human personality and restrictions on a person’s freedom of choice. Even today we continue to witness the degradation of human beings in various parts of the world because of totalitarian governments or fanatically dogmatic movements which limit themselves to particular views. Berlin’s philosophy strives to create a greater awareness that human beings are free, rich and diverse creatures. The ever-improving future of human beings is only possible when we accept the plurality that exists in human nature itself. So we must make efforts to compromise between various values by strengthening people’s participation in the larger society, and seek to abolish the class or caste systems that exist in a society, focusing instead upon educational styles that stress multiculturalism. Finally, Berlin believed that human beings can rise above conflict because they have the inherent ability to compromise and collaborate.

Berlin was one of the greatest champions of human dignity of his time—a man who spoke loudly about the dangers facing humanity because he understood the history he had experienced during his own life. His wisdom can help us appreciate how rich and how
complex human reality can be, but how it is our duty to respect and protect plurality and diversity. His philosophy reminds us of an essential aspect of human beings, which can be a fitting lesson for any state which struggles to maintain its plurality and diversity.
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