1. Critically examine the challenges to multiculturalism in Australia.

Ans: In the last ten years Australia, like a number of comparable countries in Europe and North America, has experienced public anxiety about the perceived threat to social cohesion from increasing ethno-cultural diversity. Particularly in Australia and Europe much of this anxiety arose from the conflation of security issues and broader issues concerning the integration of immigrant communities. These anxieties gave rise to debates about whether policies of multiculturalism were inhibiting integration and social cohesion and in fact contributing to segregation. Many of the issues that have animated recent public debates about multiculturalism evoke broader conceptual tensions and challenges raised by the concept and praxis of multiculturalism that have engaged theorists for a number of decades. However, evidence suggests that new challenges continue to emerge from changes to Australia’s migrant intake and the resulting growth of new and emerging communities. At the height of the Howard Government’s shift away from the term multiculturalism, attention was drawn to the need to provide adequate settlement support to African migrants in order to ensure that the community settled into the Australian community. In June 2010, the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) published the results of a three-year study on African Australians and their experiences of social inclusion and human rights in Australia. The study revealed that many African Australians, particularly those who have migrated to Australia within approximately the last 15 years, ‘experience widespread direct and indirect racism as part of their daily lives’, in a range of areas from employment, to housing, education, health services and their connection with the justice system. The study found that these experiences acted as barriers to settlement and inclusion. After a decade of exponential growth in the numbers of international students entering Australia, in 2009, reports of violence against Indian international students provoked protests in Melbourne and Sydney and triggered reviews of a range of issues affecting international students amidst debates about the role of racism in the attacks. At the end of August 2010, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UN CERD) in its response to Australia’s fifteenth to seventeenth periodic reports to the Committee drew particular attention to the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by some Indigenous Australians, African Australians, Muslim Australians, international students and asylum seekers. In its concluding observations the Committee encouraged Australia to ‘develop and implement an updated comprehensive multicultural policy that reflects its increasingly ethically and culturally diverse society’, and recommended that Australia strengthen the race and cultural dimensions of its Social Inclusion Agenda. These examples suggest that the changing nature of migration to Australia, and resulting changes in Australian society pose new challenges that necessitate a renewed engagement with discourses of diversity and pluralism. Most of these issues, such as the interaction between particular cultural practices and human rights discourses, the place of religion in the public sphere, the growth of religious extremism, or the persistence of inequalities faced by minority groups, relate to broader concerns about the meaning and relevance of culture, the parameters of multiculturalism within secular liberal democracies, the distribution of opportunities, resources and power in multicultural societies, and the construction of narratives of nationhood and national belonging. The following is a brief discussion of recent public debates about multiculturalism in Australia and a selection of countries in Europe and North America that draws on media commentary as well as the work of prominent researchers and academics writing in this field.

2. Examine the ethno-cultural identity of the Indian diaspora in Australia.

Ans: The dynamics of importing “native” ethnic cultures into a new culture entails negotiation of one’s ethno-cultural identity and personal self with the wider society. The plural circumstances and hence the possibility of multiple identities are but a necessary precursor of diasporas and its people. However, the extent to which native traits are affected is highly dependent on a broad host of factors particular to the host society. These include the experience of one’s ethnic situation within the host society the legacy of one’s diasporic trajectory, the saliency of former tertiary homeland identities, the weight and importance placed on ethnic culture and tradition, and also, the subjective negotiations of the individual in constructing their personal identities. According to Sen individual identities are negotiated and generated with intent. We negotiate, ascribe to, and select our identities through the interplay of reasoning and choice, and we construct our identities through the dialectics of circumstances, constraints and necessity. According to Mead ‘people’s selves are social products, but these selves are also purposive and creative’. Giddens’ theory of social reflexivity suggests that we ‘constantly think about, or reflect upon, the circumstances in which we live our lives’.

Reasoning and choice (agency) are thus inextricably linked by the situations/societal contexts. Individuals are hence said to be in ‘reflexive relation’ to and in constant interchanges with the externals. By the same token, human identities (as social agencies) areegotized and constructed as a reflex of one’s knowledge, awareness, and interaction.

3. Describe the relation between immigration and economic prosperity in Australia.

Ans: There’s a fairly simple relationship between immigration and economic growth. The more people you have, the bigger your economy. More people buy more goods and services. There's nothing inherently wrong with boosting your growth through immigration.

But the crime committed by Australian governments of all persuasions in the past 20 years is that, while they've been happy to accept the kudos for economic growth, they've been totally unwilling to spend the necessary cash to ensure the economy can cope with such a dramatic influx of new arrivals.