INTERROGATING GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURE IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE – THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE

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The present article is an attempt to examine and highlight the issues of cultural globalization and globalization of cultures with particular reference to India. To deal with these, I will discuss and analyze the concepts of globalization, cultural globalization and the nature of interrelation between global and local cultures in general and of India in particular. How the non-Indian global cultural elements are spreading among the Indians and how the Indian cultural elements are diffusing over the globe will be highlighted in this article. The author notes that a selective cultural adaptation is taking place in India in the context of current cultural globalization. Owing to the traditional base in social structure and institutions, much of the Indian cultural elements have sufficient strength in preserving their unique characteristics. But at the same time some Indian cultural elements have made a creative synthesis with the items of global cultural practices. Along with the unique adaptive process some Indian cultural elements have spread and made remarkable impact at the global level owing to their attractiveness and significance in contemporary times.

Globalization – Concept and Issues

Globalization has become a dominant ideology as well as a virgin field of study in contemporary social science research. From the terminological point of view, globalization means an increasing interdependence of world societies and their transformation into a single whole. Globalization is not entirely new, but certainly it has some specific characteristics in the present era. Contemporary globalization is an increasing flow of technology, trade, finance, ideas, peoples and cultures brought about by sophisticated technology of communications, travels and also by the world wide-spread of neoliberal capitalism. Globalization is the process of local and regional adaptations in many areas of human life under emerging global situation. Currently there occurs significant restructuring at three basic levels, namely, changes in economic life, changes in power and politics and changes in knowledge, culture and identity. Thus, globalization has generated a powerful force which has affected the world wide living conditions. There are various dimensions of globalization, among which the most important are: economic globalization, political globalization and cultural globalization. From theoretical point of view, the philosophy underlying globalization is the idea of globalism, which implies multifaceted doctrines that generate a global vision. The idea of globalism is based on two premises, namely: it assumes that the world is rapidly integrating in all spheres and it visualizes a complex process of convergence of people's economic, political and socio-cultural expectations. The intricate process of interconnectedness has become the soul of globalism. The idea of globalism and the process of

globalization is usually examined and analyzed through some theoretical perspectives, of which the most important are Fordism, that is high modernism and post-Fordism, that is a post-modern condition. While modernism brings consumerism and homogenization of culture, the post-modernism promises a world of difference and diversity having individual tests to counteract the hegemonic forces of modernism. Thus, to understand and to examine social complexity and recent changes the keyword globalization has been largely used as a dominant academic discourse today. The term globalization was introduced and popularized by R. Robertson in 1983 (Robertson 1990; Chumakov 2010).

Contemporary globalization is the process of complex interrelation between states and peoples which eliminates geographical distance and territorial boundaries. Arjun Appadurai designates this complex connectivity as the world of flows (Appadurai 1996). According to him, there are five major flows which characterize the process of globalization today, namely: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescape, and ideoscapes. Ethnoscape refers to the flow or movement of people in the form of immigrants, refugees, exiles, migrant workers, business travelers, tourists, knowledge workers and other moving groups. Mediascape implies a dissemination of information as well as images through electronic and other media sources, for example, computer screens, televisions, radios, newspapers, journals and other. Technoscape indicates a flow of technologies both high and low as well as mechanical information, from one place to another at a high speed. Financescape refers to the global flow of money and capital through modern banking system, stock exchanges, foreign investments and markets. This global capital flow is the soul of globalization and market economy today. Ideoscape means the global flow of ideas, ideologies and knowledge. Actually these flow of ideas are the issues with which the people act upon and includes states' ideologies as well as counterideologies of resistance against the states (Lewellen 2002).

In the globalized world, the revolutionary changes in technology, transport, communication, ideas and human behavior have altered people's way of life and cultures in all corners of the globe and transformed the segmented world into a global village. The term global village was coined by Marshall McLuhan (McLuhan 1962) to describe the present form of global connectivity. Global village establishes closer contacts between diverse groups of unknown people, increasing interaction and friendship amongst them and thereby initiate the emergence of the world community and world citizens. The world citizens denote nothing but the imagined global community's members who are expected to promote global culture and global civilization.

Cultural Globalization

Of various dimensions of globalization, cultural globalization has attracted much attention on the part of anthropologists and sociologists. Cultural globalization is a process which creates global culture. Theoretically it is based on the values of multiculturalism and democracy, but practically it is hegemonic in nature. Globalization seeks to promote a world view towards intercultural exchange and promotion of multicultural society with due respect to local and regional cultures. But the most important feature of cultural aspect of globalization is that it attempts to promote the Western (Euro-American) cultures and to project them as a global culture through the manipulation of mass medias and other means. The cross-border linkages and peoples' continuous movement across the world strengthen the global ties in the form of ideas, values, fashions and other elements of culture. The idea behind globalization of culture is the creation of a common value, taste and life style. The most basic issue of cultural globalization is whose culture acquires a global spread and whose does not. Within such a context, it is difficult to ignore the issue of cultural imposition and penetration of

the developed West. Cultural globalization is actually a more complex process, its strength lies in its apparent invisibility and much of it is hidden. It does not provoke public reaction unless it is politicized – that is politicization of culture and culturalization of politics.

Today almost every society is subject to the twin process of globalization from without and localization from within. Global culture which has been emerging today consists of a number of different non-integrated traits – a series of mixed cultural elements and items or habits derived from different and divergent individual cultures. The global culture is not an extended version of the local cultures; rather it is the cultural interaction of the global and the local level. A local culture is the product of face-to-face interaction of members of a distinct society, whereas the global culture is a product of interaction among people of diverse societies living far from each other. As regards the local-global cultural interaction, it is necessary to see how the global cultural flows become locally appropriated, incorporated, syncretized and hybridized. R. Robertson (1990, 1992, 1995) coined the term *glocalization* to describe this process whereby local culture is integrated into the global one.

Cultural globalization may also be considered as an agent of keeping cultural traditions alive, because increasing access and exposure to media helps in bringing more awareness about cultural diversities and promotion of local cultures. There is an ambiguity in the context of cultural globalization. On the one hand, it advocates for global cultural integration, while on the other hand, the global political scenario is determined and dominated by the notion of cultural and civilizational clashes. Now the most crucial question before us, whether the different cultures and civilizations are integrating together and forming a new global civilization or they are confronting each other for destroying the already existing cultural and civilizational diversities of the globe. Today people all over the world realize the major cultural crisis, whereas the ideas of global peace and inter-cultural and inter-civilizational dialogues are getting far more popularity than the notion of cultural and civilizational clashes. All these issues should be also considered soon. As regards the examination of the process of cultural globalization, the most relevant concepts in anthropology are: acculturation, diffusion and integration. Evolutionistic and relativistic approaches are regarded as the most appropriate anthropological perspectives in examining the process of current cultural globalization.

In the era of cultural globalization the basic concept of culture as particularistic, localized and society specific phenomenon is fast becoming outdated due to the increasing penetration of external elements of non-integrated traits accumulated through the process of multiple global interactions. The boundaries of culture proved to be quite flexible today. With the increasing process of globalization the concept of culture remains no longer the same as before. Today a culture is neither a closed system and an integrated whole, nor the internally uniform among the members of a specific society. The very basic notion of culture as its rootedness into a particular geographical territory is being untenable nowadays. In the past people used to be creators and carriers of culture, but today the corporate bodies and mass media have emerged as the powerful creators and carriers of culture. In this connection the study of the relationship between globalization and culture has a great relevance (Appadurai 1991, 1996, 2000; Berger and Huntington 2002; Bourdieu 1997; Dasgupta and Kiely 2006; Engineer 2005; Giddens 1990, 2000; Grinin and Korotayev 2010; Joseph 1998; Lewellen 2002).

Globalization and Culture – The Indian Scenario

Geographically India is a vast and diverse country and various groups of peoples with different racial, ethnic, linguistic, regional, religious, and cultural backgrounds inhabit it. India is known throughout the world for its human and cultural diversity. In the

course of its history India has witnessed a unique cultural synthesis in spite of its incredible diversities. As a result, the structure of Indian society is very complex. The contemporary Indian society and its social and cultural organization is the outcome of interaction between multiple traditions of India that is great, little, national, regional, local, western and now global. The mutual coexistence and integration actually helped in generating a unique civilization of this country that has no parallel in the world.

India has never been free from external linkages, hence the forces of globalization has always been operating here. Immigration and migration played a very crucial role in shaping the Indian population as well as its society, culture and civilization. Despite the immense cultural diversities there has been a growing convergence of cultures because of people's adaptive necessities to cope with new forces. Socio-cultural dynamics is a highly complex phenomenon in the Indian context. The changes in the Indian society and culture have been occurring through both the exogenous and endogenous processes. In India the socio-cultural changes under the modern West's impact have significantly started since the 19th century onwards and this have been the most important aspect of the country's socio-cultural dynamics. India has always been a traditional society and it is only through the close contact with the modern West that the process of modernization both technical and cultural was introduced into the Indian society. Since the last quarter of the 20th century India has also witnessed the powerful forces of current globalization.

The Arabs, the Central Asians, the Portuguese, the French, and other external groups had close contacts with India as regards trade, commerce and other relations. But it is the British and later the Euro-American influence that has made a profound impact on the Indian society. In anthropological and sociological terminology, this change of Indian society is designated as a heterogeneous process of change and which has initiated the contemporary globalization process in the country. In order to examine the socio-cultural dynamics with particular reference to Western and global cultural impacts we must know the very nature and character of Indian culture as well as Western culture. Indian cultural values are highly traditional, while the Western cultural values are strongly modern in terms of rationalism, utilitarianism and idealism. It also contains the elements of egalitarianism and universalism, unlike the Indian system which is very much rooted in the values of hierarchy and holism. In the context of change the Western culture follows the idea of historicity, while the Indian culture has the values of both change and continuity. There has been a distinction between 'individualistic' Western cultures versus 'collectivistic' Indian culture. In India there has always been a synthesis and accommodation between the two or more distinct cultural traditions instead of contradictions and conflicts between them. Indian traditional institutions like marriage, family, kinship, caste, caste like social groups and above all religion have played a very crucial role in the process of accommodation and adjustment between the traditional local system and the new global forces.

When we look at the impacts of cultural globalization on various segments of the Indian society, particularly since the late 20th century we observe a very complex picture. Actually, globalization has produced both positive and negative impacts on Indian society. Certainly a part of people is a gainer but the other section is a looser. The Indian elite and middle class have been able to use the opportunities and benefits of globalization, while the country's marginal social groups, for example, tribes, minorities, *dalits* and women suffer from exclusion, oppression and marginalization. Today the process of globalization makes some Indian peoples more materialistic, pragmatic and money-minded. All this has far reaching consequences in Indian society and culture.

Within the Indian context, the process of cultural globalization demonstrates some unique features. On the one hand, global cultural elements have already made a signifi-

cant impact among the Indian masses and at the same time several elements and aspects of Indian culture have shown a wider global spread. Traditionally India is not a consumer society, but in the era of globalization, a powerful consumer class is growing very fast in the country. In India, there has been a great demand of consumer goods among the industrialists, businessmen, rich farmers and growing middle class which together constitutes one third of India's total population. The media, both print and electronic, play a crucial role in spreading a consumer culture among the masses. The younger generation of India today is highly fashion-conscious, and it is the multinational companies and business houses who by means of media for propagating fashion consciousness among them in the form of modeling and fashion shows.

Indian cities and towns are nowadays characterized by the growing number of shopping malls and to visit them for shopping is very common among the affluent Indians. There has been a significant change in leisure time entertainment. Instead of traditional gossiping, chatting and visiting relatives and friends, people now watch television programmes at home or attend clubs and restaurants outside. There has been a strong presence of popular and mass culture in television images and the latter have a profound impact on the day-to-day cultural life of many Indians. The television programmes, particularly the associated advertisements promoted both by national and international channels, actually shape the mindset as well as the behavior pattern of the younger generation. Most of the television images hardly maintain the real quality of Indian traditional cultures, rather they promote sex, violence, pleasure and thrills for the sake of business interest and all these ultimately affect the Indian society, culture and traditions.

The rapidly growing IT sectors and computer network system in India have given to a sizable part of Indian population the opportunity to make use of internet communication for their needs and aspirations. In fact, the use of internet and cell phones increases day by day. Telephonic conversion, email communication and sending SMS messages gradually have replaced the habit of letter writings of the country's educated/literate people. However, the negative impacts of internet and cell phone facilities are also very conspicuous. Cyber crime is an ongoing social problem of developing India.

There has been a significant change in the sphere of education and knowledge system. The contemporary global epoch is also known as the era of knowledge. But the entire education system is being gradually turned to professionalism and business. Many traditional and classical subjects and humanities courses are now unattractive and outdated. Majority of the students, particularly male students are running after professional education for the sake of employment, money and glamour. Technology and management courses are very popular among the praiseworthy students. Gender and class distinction is quite conspicuous in the educational sphere. One can observe the increasing number of female students in humanities and social science subjects and the boys in technology and management courses. The same way, the professional courses are almost monopolized by the rich and affluent sections. On the other hand, in the field of research the basic and fundamental works are relegated to the background. While applied and action research get top priorities in educational planning and curricula to cope with the ongoing demands of industrialization and commercialization. Moreover, the privatization of education system gradually spreads in India and that leads to the emergence of educational business and thereby increasing class distinction in education system in a complex manner.

In the field of games and sports there has been a significant change. Today due to the forces of global market economy, traditional and local games quickly vanish in India and they are replaced by the most popular money fetching games and sports. Due to various reasons the cricket is considered to be the most popular game among the youths in both rural and urban India.

The ongoing growth of tourist industry in India is considered to be the result of globalization. It has both positive as well as negative consequences for the country. Cultural tourism in one way helps to sustain and propagate traditional culture, but at the same time, the developing tourist industry leads to environmental degradation, sex tourism, trafficking of antiquities and hybridization of local cultures. Those people who live in and around Indian tourist spots are very much influenced by the global tourists' cultures.

The western style of greetings and exchanging gifts and presents of branded companies with friends, colleagues and relatives is nowadays the most common practice among the upper and middle class Indians. Celebrations of birthday and marriage anniversary and other social events in the western manner are now the most important social functions and gatherings among the rich and affluent strata of India.

Some Indian youths, especially the college and University students of urban areas now observe Valentine's Days where exchange of gifts and cards are considered very important to them. The celebration of teachers' day, mothers' day, fathers' day are now very popular, at those occasions presenting gifts is more important rather than emotional feelings and responsibilities. There has been a gradual change in kinship terminology, particularly among the educated section of India. To use western terms to address the close kin members is now very common in urban India.

India is known for its food diversities, but today fast and junk food is very popular in Indian markets. Noodles, burgers, pizza, chips and other ready-to-eat food are now available very easily. Soft drinks, ice cream and branded chocolates are quite popular among the young generation and all these dominate their food choice. Unhealthy eating habit of junk foods is growing day by day. Actually, globalization has significantly affected the food habits as well as life style of a large number of Indian people.

Globalization has increased both spatial and social mobility of the Indians. Consequently, there has been a significant restructuring in Indian joint family system. Traditional marriage practices are also modernized. But all these do not alter the basic character of these important social institutions of the country. Kinship still plays the most vital role in maintaining 'collectivism' of the Indian social life in spite of strong global forces of 'individualism'.

Globalization also encourages the flow and spread of some Indian cultural elements. The new means of communication empower local communities to cultivate their respective cultural practices for enhancing cultural interaction with the global world. In addition, there grows a number of cultural entrepreneurs in India who undertake marketing and spreading of cultural resources and goods to the external world. As a result, Indian food, herbal products, handicrafts and art objects are available in all corners of the globe. Indian traditional medicine, health care system (yoga), classical songs and music as well as dances are getting a tremendous popularity at the global level. In the contemporary restless world, the Indian philosophy of 'non-violence' and 'peace' is gradually propagating throughout the world. Indian film industries, especially the Bollywood films, have made a significant contribution at the global market of entertainment. Nowadays Indian film actors and actresses as well as the experts in performing arts and other artists are internationally worldwide (Basa 2004; Dasgupta 2004; Ghosh 2006; Mondal 2003, 2006, 2007; Rao 2002; Roy 2005; Srinivas 2002).

Concluding Observations

Globalization has produced a notable impact not only on some cultural elements and traditions, but also on some features of community and society in India, particularly in urban and industrial areas. There has been a gradual growth of 'mass society' which is devoid of major ethnic, caste, class and regional divisions. Residential and occupational mobility, public education system and new social organization have significantly reduced the intercommunity variation in some norms, values and behavior pattern of

the members of the emerging 'mass society' and this facilitates their adoption of 'mass culture' which favours cultural homogenization and cultural hybridization. The traditional *gemeinschaft* types of Indian societies are gradually acquiring the characteristics of *gesellschaft* type. Moreover, a post-*gesellschaft* (post-global) social formation has been slowly but gradually emerging among the elites in urban India due to new social networks of interaction, automated mode of production, electronic communication and meritocracy in social stratification. In urban India the shift from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft* weakens the kinship and community ties, but the Indian rural societies' glocalization combines the local communities of *gemeinschaft* and global features of *gesellschaft*.

Even though the impact of cultural globalization is quite visible in India, still the major aspects of Indian customs and cultural traditions continue to co-exist side by side with the new elements of global culture. Actually, the impact of cultural globalization is more apparent in the material aspects and is significantly smaller in religious and social aspects of culture. In India, the most typical example of glocalization is the indianization (hybridization) of the global food items, for example, vegetable pizza, vegetable burger, vegetable chawmin, vegetable momo and vegetable Beriani *etc*. Similarly in the social context there has been a trend of modernization of Indian tradition viz. structural rearrangement of family, change in marriage customs and weakening or liberalization of orthodox religious practices. The religious ceremonies in India today are mostly festive oriented. There has been a tendency of compartmentalization of behavior pattern of the Indians for participation in both global and local processes to keep the tradition alive. Owing to the strong normative and social base, many Indian traditional cultural elements have sufficient strength in preserving their unique features. It is also very interesting to note that several Indian traditional cultural elements have made a creative synthesis with the items of global cultural practices for necessities to cope with the changing situation. Along with the unique adaptive process, some Indian cultural elements have made significant impacts at the global level owing to their attraction, necessities and significance of contemporary times.

The Indian traditional institutions like marriage, family, kinship, caste and above all the religion as well as the folk traditions, still continue to define the essence of cultural life of the respective groups living in different parts of the country. As a matter of fact, the global cultural influence has the surface level penetration in Indian society. Those traditional institutions and associated norms and values act as forts with sufficient command to protect the basic characteristics of Indian cultural traditions. But the fact remains that the Indian culture and traditions are not always the same as they used to be due to the influence of modernization and globalization. It is also true that the changes did not take place through the total replacement of traditional structures and institutions, rather the traditional features have shown an amazing resilience by means of structural rearrangement for their basic features adapting to emerging situation. Change and continuity are the basic characteristics of the Indian society and culture and this is also true even in the present era of cultural globalization.

The notion of cultural and civilizational clash is not at all tenable with respect to India as a tradition of synthesis between different cultural elements has always prevailed in the country. There has also been a synthesis between old and new cultural elements. Actually, unity within diversity and convergence out of divergence are the roots of Indian traditions and civilization.

In India there has also been a rising trend of culture of protest or politics of culture against the negative consequences of cultural globalization. This signifies an important turn towards the revival of traditional cultural elements, which helps to sustain as well as to preserve Indian cultural traditions.

In the era of cultural globalization the Indians differ among themselves with respect to their cultural practices. As such, there are three types of cultural groups and cultures which function in India today, namely: traditional, mass and elite ones. The traditional cultural groups and culture act as a mechanism of conservation and stabilization, the mass ones – as the mechanism of syncretization, hybridization and creolization, and the elite – as the mechanism of creating new values and practices. As a result, today one can already see the presence of both traditional and global cultural elements in India.

Local-global cultural interaction is now an emerging trend and it strengthens the process of glocalization in India. Cultural hybridization is significantly visible in some aspects of people's life style in the country, especially in the aspects of their language, education, food, dress, fashion, entertainment, manners and social behaviour. The process of compartmentalization of behaviour pattern and the mechanism of blending between the local (traditional) and the global (Western) cultural elements played a crucial role in generating the process of glocalization. Continuity and change as well as change and continuity are deeply rooted in Indian culture and traditions which are still very active in the current era of cultural globalization. The age-old elements of Indian values and traditions (structural as well as institutional) not only act as a strong potential to resist the forces of cultural assimilation, but also promote a cultural integration for the growth of its unique civilization. Actually, in the era of globalization the selective changes are taking place in Indian culture and traditions for the sake of people's functional necessities due to demands of the situation.

Nowadays, the boundaries of cultures are quite flexible and this is also true with respect to India. Today the Indian cultural elements, both traditional and modern or global are neither the closed system of integrated whole, nor the internally uniform among the members of a cultural group. Today the people of India are practicing the elements of many cultures; some of those elements are their own and some are alien. These cultural elements are disintegrated in characters in terms of their relation to the core elements of Indian cultural traditions. Thus, the concept of culture itself in the present juncture needs to be redefined and reformulated.

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