

Cultural Dimensions of Globalization: Continuity and Change with Special Reference to Kashmiri Culture

Manzoor Hussain

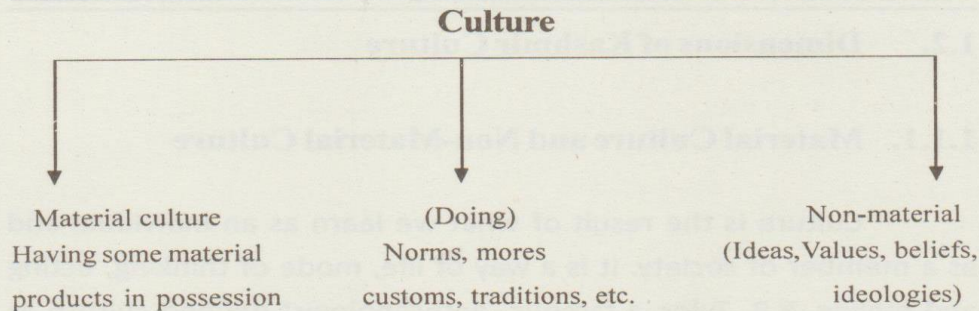
1.1. Introduction

Globalization refers to an increasing global interconnectedness. It is a process rather than outcome, which refers to the trend toward the growing interconnectedness of different cultures of the world. It primarily is an interchange of economic, social, political, technological and ecological attributes that takes place between cultures when different cultures come into contact with each other. Ideas, technologies and cultural attributes are exchanged at a higher acceleration. Contemporary globalization has led to a greater volume of exchange of goods and services and it has led to a greater variety of things being exchanged that have a significant cultural bearing. Many goods and services, once non-traded, now regularly enter the world market. For example, a Japanese architect may design a building in France; marketing services may be transmitted from India and Kashmir to USA or UK, etc. Globalization has profound impact on Kashmiri culture. It has affected what we eat and the way we prepare our food, what we wear and the materials from which our clothing is made, it has affected the music we hear, the books we read, even the language we used to communicate with others. There is threat for Kashmiri language to lose its dynamic character and at the same more people today are bilingual or multilingual than ever before. The central problem of today's global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization; there have been apprehensions about cultural marginalization or cultural exclusion as well.

1.2. Dimensions of Kashmir Culture

1.1.1. Material Culture and Non-Material Culture

Culture is the result of what we learn as an individual and as a member of society. It is a way of life, mode of thinking, acting and feeling. E.B. Tylor, a famous anthropologist defined culture as 'a systematic whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'. Culture, collectively refers to the distinctive way of life of a group of people, their way of living, their customs, their names, folkways, mores, etc. Culture is an outcome of society and interactions among various groups and society is able to survive and perpetuate itself because of the existence of culture. Material culture consists of manufactured objects such as tools, furniture, automobiles, roads, buildings, bridges, irrigation ditches, cultivated farms and infact any physical substance which has been changed and used by people. Such manufactured objects are called artifacts. In the game of cricket, for example, the gloves, bats, uniforms, balls, wickets, pitch, etc. are few elements of material culture. As classic instance of material culture in Kashmir is '*Samavar*', '*Trami*', *Tash-Naer*, (all utensils used for eating purposes). Similarly musical instruments such as '*Baja*', '*Rabab*', and '*Sarang*' are other examples of material culture. Non-material culture, on the other hand comprises words used by people, their beliefs and habits. It would include rules of the game, the skills of the players, the behaviour and strategy, etc. In Kashmiri culture '*Rouf*', '*Chakri*', '*Wanwun*' are prominent examples of non-material culture associated with music.



1.2.2. Subculture and Counter Culture

The smallest unit of culture is called a cultural trait. Material cultural traits include such things as nail, the screw driver, the pencil, the brick, etc and non-material cultural traits include shaking hands, saluting the flag, etc. A cluster of related traits is called cultural complex. A subculture consists of a culture within a culture. It represents an elaboration of the concept of culture specialties wherein certain groups within the society share behavioural patterns that are not shared within the larger society. For example, every society includes some-group of people who share some complexes which are not shared by the rest of the society. The rich people have a life style very different from that of the poor. Subcultures which are in active opposition of dominant cultures are called countercultures. A delinquent gang is a social group with definite moral values but these are quite different from those of conventional middle class groups. In Kashmiri culture, 'Hyppies' are an classic example of counter culture who share major traits of the dominant culture but some traits are in active opposition of it. For example, they keep long hair, long beard, wear (queer) dress and also possess different life style habits.

1.3. Cultural Penetration

Cultural dynamics is a product of interaction with other cultures. It is the outcomes of a process of mixing, borrowing and

adapting cultural attributes and often the attributes that are borrowed and adopted come from cultures that are alien, distant and foreign. National and regional cultures are invariably a product of assimilation of various elements from other cultures of a synthesis of elements that is product of cultural interpenetration. Cultural interpenetration through the exchange of commodities is so pervasive that it is difficult if not impossible to distinguish between original and imported cultural attributes. Consider a person drinking '*Turkish Coffee*' in Kashmir. The coffee originated in Ethiopia, the sugar in India or New Guinea, the porcelain cup in China, the tablecloth in the restaurant is made of cotton, which originated from a plant domesticated in Central America and the restaurant itself is a French invention. Like wise, diseases which originated in one place of the world are exported to other part of the world. The penetration of global music has resulted in the marginalization of traditional Kashmir music and pop music and its local variations can be heard in all social settings from weddings to religious festivals and birthday celebrations. Similarly other cultural traits are facing cultural penetration in Kashmir.

1.4. Globalization of Culture

The global communication technologies have lead to the globalization of culture which has undermined the meaning of community and traditional institutions and values of life. 'Story telling' which was once a common practice in Kashmir through which old handed their experience, culture, traditions, oral history and way of life to the young who had a sense of place and their roots is now a rare and out dated phenomena. Similarly, folk culture and village and tribal festivals are being packaged and marketed through electronic media, plucked out of context and cut off from their roots (Pannikar, 1995). Kashmiri culture is wired and plugged into the same TV programmes, movies, news, music, life styles and enter-

tainment. Satellite cables, phones, walkman, VCDs, DVDs and retail giants and other marvels and wonders of entertainment technology are creating the mass marketing of culture and expansion of consumer culture. The result is the trend towards homogenized global cultural in a new form and shape which may be called 'hybrid culture' with new permutations, new combinations, new options and a new culture.

1.5. Cultural Lag in Kashmir

When changes occur in the material culture these in turn stimulate changes in the non-material culture, particularly in the adaptive culture or the ways of utilizing, exploiting or rendering more serviceable the material changes. But this adaptive culture may be slow to respond and hence a lag (W.F. Ogburn). In Kashmiri culture there are many forms of cultural lag. During the last one hundred years much has been borrowed from the west and India in Kashmir's material culture and it is no way inferior to the west in respect of superficial gaudiness. But in spite of having borrowed so much from the west in its material culture, it has undergone very limited changes in the sphere of non-material culture. In Kashmir, women share equal with men in receiving education, casting votes, taking equal rights in social, political and religious life but how different she is from her western counterpart in her sentiments, feelings, thoughts and ideals. Culture is changing very rapidly in the sphere of fashion, dress, artificial beautification, art, recreation etc. but the change in the sphere of religious notions is very slow. A major cause contributing to the slow speed of change is that customs and traditions are deeply loved and respected in Kashmir.

1.6. Cultural Continuity and Change in Kashmir

Culture is an evolutionary phenomenon and no culture is ever static. All cultures change, although they do so in different ways and at

different rates. Culture tends to be inherently conservative, especially in its non-material aspects; people are reluctant to give up old values, customs, and beliefs in favour of new ones. But changes in one area of culture are usually accompanied by changes in other areas. If this were not the case, cultures would have inevitably died down. Kashmiri culture possesses both the characteristics of continuity and change. Mother country is held in highest esteem and some places and springs are regarded as sacred. Education has always been most attended in Kashmiri culture. It was not theocratic though the purohiths had a hand in it. The aims of learning are stated to be *shraddha* (faith) *medha* (retention of knowledge acquired), *praja* (progeny), *dhana* (wealth), *ayuh* (longevity) and *amritatva* (immortality). Thus, there has been stress in both secular and spiritual life. Institutional changes too have the impact on culture of the people. The community ownership of land recognized '*vaishya*' as the backbone of economy, after cultivator become a '*rayout*', he was reduced to be a service man and when various land tenures especially when Raja Gulab Singh got the whole Kashmir including land, people, animals, plants etc. for 75 lakh rupees from the Britishers, many got alienated from their land affecting cultural pattern and social order. Later land to tiller holds the hope of cultural change. Contemporary culture can be called as a hybrid culture - the trademark of which is a social innovation and change co-existing with continuities and tradition in social and cultural life. Cultural change has been thus a continuous process but the degree of change has been slow and the conflict between tradition and modernity does not present any serious problem.

1.7. Factors and Conditions of Cultural Change

1.7.1. Discovery, Invention and Diffusion

Three distinctive processes are involved in cultural change; discovery, invention and diffusion. Discovery is the perception of

an aspect of reality that already exists – the hallucinogenic properties of peyote, the social structure of a termite colony, the functions of the heart, and the cultural practices of another society. Invention is the combination of new use of existing knowledge to produce something that did not exist before – the compass, the United Nations, the atomic bomb, rock music, etc. Diffusion is the spread of cultural elements from one culture to another and is the source of most cultural change. But the important dimension is that an innovation must be compatible with the basic values of the culture and must fit into its total environment. It is for this reason that wearing of 'mini-clothes' has been unacceptable in Kashmir whereas computers, roads and bridges, mechanics, traffic and traffic regulations, automobiles have been successfully introduced.

1.7.2. Migration and Urbanization

Migration is not a new phenomenon in Kashmir. People leave their homes in search of better economic opportunities both within and outside. But the current pace of globalization has put a new spirit on global migration causing uprootedness and human displacement. Migration is not a choice but an economic necessity namely because of the unequal development between regions and between rural and urban centers. Similarly, urbanization is an important driving force for connecting because urban areas offer many economic opportunities to rural people. Urban labour markets offer opportunities to switch jobs rapidly, diversify income and become upwardly mobile with a very low asset base and skills. In Kashmir, there is greater emphasis on agricultural produce and export of skilled services such as information and communication technology (ICT) both of which may not create a great demand for labour. At the same time cheap imports, a result of liberalization measures and low import tariffs, can threaten local agricultural production systems with the result that illiterate people with a limited skills

base might migrate to urban areas in search of work.

1.7.3. Globalization, Liberalization and Privatization

The most important dimensions of globalization, liberalization and privatization for the cultural change are the breaking down of national economic barriers, international spread of trade, financial and production activities and the growing power of transnational corporations and international financial institutions, foreign direct investment which includes globalization of financial markets; infrastructure development; development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) etc. In India, including Kashmir, the pace of globalization gathered momentum when the Central Government (Narasimha Rao government) introduced the package of reforms at the behest of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank aimed at economic liberalization in June, 1991. The reforms include short-term stabilization measures encompassing devaluation of the rupee, restraint on public expenditure, a plan for the reduction of the fiscal deficit and removal of restrictions on the flow of foreign capital to Indian markets. The medium and long term structural adjustment programme (SAP) included a series of measures aimed at liberalization of trade and deregulation of industry. Similarly privatization is gaining momentum and there has been disinvestment of public sector undertakings (PSU's). In this context, Kashmir culture is under stress and tensions from outside and within and there is consolidation of tradition and modernity in the new form of contemporary Kashmiri culture.

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