



CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL ASPECTS OF GLOBALIZATION: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION

Cultures are spreading, religions are blowing like a wind from one to another part of the world, and hence, we can name it as Globalization. Along with the cultures; Globalization is integrated with regional economies, societies and philosophies through a global network of political ideas through communication, transportation, and trade. Apart from all, Globalization also cleverly transfers spirituality. Modern spiritual leaders (especially from India) are playing supportive role for this. Globalization; however, usually recognized as being driven by a combination of economic, technological, socio-cultural, political, and biological factors. The term can also refer to the transnational circulation of ideas, languages, or popular culture through acculturation. Globalization is most closely associated with the term economic globalization: the integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, foreign direct investment, capital flows, migration, the spread of technology, and military presence. The United Nations ESCWA (economic and social commission for western Asia) says globalization “is a widely-used term that can be defined in a number of different ways. When used in an economic context, it refers to the reduction and removal of barriers between national borders in order to facilitate the flow of goods, capital, and services and labor, although considerable barriers remain to the flow of labor.” Globalization is aorta of philosophy through which ideas are flowing. The term Culture, which originally meant the cultivation of the soul or mind, acquires most of its later modern meanings in the writings of the eighteenth-century German thinkers, who on various levels developing Rousseau’s criticism of modern liberalism and Enlightenment. Two primary meanings of culture emerge from this period: culture as the folk-spirit having a unique identity, and culture as cultivation of inwardness or free individuality. The first meaning is predominant in our current use of the term ‘culture,’ although the second still plays a large role in what we think culture should achieve, namely the full ‘expression’ of the unique of ‘authentic’ self.

Japan is the foremost example of cultural and religious assimilation which spread spirituality.

The Japanese have beautifully assimilated gods and goddesses of other cultures into their belief system. Goddesses like Benzaiten, Inari are two images of the Divine Feminine from the pantheon of Hindu goddesses, Saraswati and Lakshmi. Therefore,



impact of term Globalization is very old, but present concept has some new sources. Hence, so many mythological, cultural, religious, spiritual and social overlaps have been existed in the era of Globalization¹. Globalization demands a modern society characterized by, among other things, a comparatively high degree of urbanization, commercialization, industrialization, widespread literacy, a high per capita income, extensive geographical and social mobility, a pervasive mass communications network and the widespread participation of its members in economic, political and social process. Thus, globalization has set a new world order (NWO) having both negative and positive attributes i.e. cultural, spiritual and philosophical aspect of globalization. In recent cultural studies, the foremost inquiry concerns the influence of globalization has upon culture. So, it follows the three major paradigms Polarization, Homogenization and Hybridization. Under the Polarization comes the Clash of Civilizations, as Benjamin Barber argues that cultural forces in the shadow of globalization are experiencing a global cultural polarization and characterizes this cultural phenomenon². These dialectical metaphors refer to the cultural polarization of global consumer capitalism, metonymically embodied in McDonald's, and Jihad, referring to cultural fundamentalism (and tribalism) and the struggle for justice for the downtrodden left maimed in the path of global capitalism. McWorld, then, promises to bind us together through consumption of so-called "cultural" commodities, while Jihad promises liberation from the capitalistic characteristic of consumption and greed through tribal pursuit of justice.

Samuel Huntington said, "The polarization is a crucial, indeed a central, aspect of what global politics is likely to be in coming year will be the clash of civilizations. With the end of the Cold War, international politics move out of its Western phase, and its centerpiece becomes the interaction between the West and non-Western civilizations and among non-Western civilizations."³ He also divides the world into the West and the Rest. Huntington writes that the political and ideological boundaries of the Cold War (i.e. between the USA and USSR) have been replaced by the boundaries of civilizations (i.e. between the West and Islam) and these boundaries between civilizations are the flash points for crisis and bloodshed.⁴ Huntington considers the West as a universal civilization and the rest are attempting a modernization without westernization, and moreover, these differing modernities lead to the breakdown of hegemony of western civilization⁵. Huntington's view of cultural conflict emphasizes that which distinguishes one people from another. According to Nederveen Pieterse, "Diversity is one side of the picture but only one, and interaction, commonality or the possibility of commonality is another."⁶

In the Homogenization we have the McDonaldization of Culture. In the dark shadow of globalization, the most widely held description of culture is that of homogenization; the convergence toward a common set of cultural traits and practices.⁷ It has led to such phrases as Coca-colonization and McDonaldization. The notion of McDonaldization refers to the worldwide homogenization of societies through the impact of multinational corporations.⁸ In this view, the mechanisms for



change are closely linked with the globalization of the market economy and multinational corporations. As Robert Holton notes; that the consumer capitalism of this type has been built upon a standardized brand image, mass advertising, and the high status given by many Third World populations to Western products and services.⁹ Furthermore, this view of cultural homogenization and the global economy has been strengthened by the rise of the Internet and other information technologies. Companies such as Yahoo!, Microsoft, Google, and Motorola have perhaps surpassed McDonalds and Coca-Cola as cultural icons at least among the world's affluent populations. This reveals that, if there is any warrant to the homogenization thesis, it is not a static homogenization. Another dimension of cultural homogenization is that of the assimilation of Elites into the political, educational, and economic life of Western society. The experience of a Western education not only globally disseminates Western knowledge but also creates similar values which then influence international organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and multinational/global corporations. This gives rise to the emergence of similar interests of global elites¹⁰.

Therefore, third, if the world is experiencing cultural homogenization, we must view this homogenization as being a multi-centered phenomenon, a homogenization of peripheral cultures to "core" regional cultural powers. The third and final paradigm is Hybridization which views the interconnection between globalization and culture as a hybridization of cultures in the world. Holton writes that the hybridization thesis focuses "on the intercultural exchange and the incorporation of cultural elements from a variety of sources within particular cultural practices."¹¹ For example, the McDonald's in Moscow that mixes an American fast-food restaurant into a Russian market. Or the use of ATM's in Japan used by women in kimonos or the young American students who eat at a Vietnamese restaurant after class in Toronto. Hybridization is not only urban, for example, agricultural techniques (such as plowing techniques and crop rotation). The evidence that strengthens the hybridization is difficult to exhaust. "It resolves the tension between purity and emanation, between the local and the global, in the dialectic according to which the local is in the global and the global is in the local."¹² Hybridization, according to Nederveen Pieterse, views globalization as an open-ended process of interconnection of cultural influences (eastern as well as western). "The growing awareness of cultural difference" and globalization are interdependent¹³. Furthermore, Holton writes that hybridization refers to "cultural forms that are somehow trans-contextual but less than cosmopolitan in scope."¹⁴

The hidden agenda of globalization is alarming for it advocates cultural homogenization, and thereby threatens ethnic diversity, cultural specificity, national autonomy and the sovereignty of developing nations. In the new world economy, which hinges on new technology, migration and competition, the global flow of information is controlled by Western agents promoting Western cultural values that alter the traditional indigenous social and cultural system of developing societies. However, lately a counter



to post-modernist perspective has also begun to emerge in the various parts of the globe which points to the loss of faith in the ideas of progress and a return to pluralism, diversity and local narratives.¹⁵

PHILOSOPHY OF SPIRITUALITY IN GLOBALIZATION

What has been Globalization impact on culture in India? Every educated Indian seems to believe that nothing in Hindu India, past or present, is to be approved unless recognized and recommended by an appropriate authority in the West. There is an all-pervading presence of a positive, if not worshipful, attitude towards everything in western society and culture, past as well as present in the name of progress, reason and science. Nothing from the West is to be rejected unless it has first been weighed and found wanting by a Western evaluation. Swami Vivekananda foresaw the dangers of Globalization as early as in 1893 when he spoke at the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago. To quote his soul-stirring words: 'Shall India die? Then, from the world all spirituality will be extinct, all sweet-souled sympathy for religion will be extinct, all ideality will be extinct ; and in its place will reign the duality of lust and luxury as the male and female deities, with money as its priest, fraud, force, and competition its ceremonies, and human soul its sacrifice. Such a thing can never be'. Precisely such a terrible thing is taking place in India today on account of the inexorable and immutable process of Globalization.

New age spirituality employs philosophy in two ways. Firstly, to provide a logical framework which not only admits the possibility of the beliefs of new age spirituality, but further argues that these beliefs are the most rational explanation for our current condition. Secondly, on the basis of these beliefs, an attempt is made to build a life philosophy that deals with the big picture, not merely the irrelevant detail. Spirit is the one great world that encompasses all facets of new age spirituality. It is the eternal, animating force that lies at the essence of all that is. Spirituality describes our most noble, but inevitably feeble, attempts to understand Spirit and to live in harmony with it.

What Does Spiritual Mean? There's a lot of interest these days in Spirituality, and a lot of time, effort, and dollars are spent in the attempt to be Spiritual? Which is a status queue in new economic era, But what does Spiritual really mean, and what behaviors will actually make you more Spiritual? Well, surprising as it may seem, you already are Spiritual. Be you saint or sinner, capitalist or communist, all-round good guy or local weirdo, you can't help be anything but. The entire physical universe, and everything that's in it, including all humanity, is a manifestation of Spirit, a tiny part of a great adventure. Born into this condition that we might get the chance to co-exist as an individual alongside other individuals, facing the kind of challenges that life presents. Being Spiritual doesn't mean abandoning your worldly possessions and sitting semi-naked beneath a tree in permanent meditation.

It doesn't mean being perfection incarnate, as humans we are all flawed, and



our purpose is trying to make the best of the incomplete hand we've been dealt. Being Spiritual means accepting responsibility for our actions, and even our thoughts, conducted under our free will. Knowing that actions and thoughts, like pebbles thrown into a pool, create ripples that spread out into eternity.

We are but small cogs in an infinitely complex machine, but each having a small but significant effect upon the whole. Through our thoughts and actions we can each make the world a little better, or a little worse. We can each help, or hinder, human – and thus spiritual – evolution. Being Spiritual is simply adopting this awareness and choosing to consciously act accordingly. Spirituality means today is to grow culturally, religiously and economically. It also includes Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha as Globalization.

THREATS OF GLOBALIZATION: AS A WAR OF SUPERMACY

Not since the era of the Roman Empire has a nation sustained its position as a world¹⁶ superpower as long and as dynamically as the United States has. From the end of the 19th century through the 20th century, America's ambitious work force propelled our agricultural, textile, manufacturing, and technology industries to elite status in the world economy. Americans took pride in being number one in just about everything. Times change, however, and cracks are appearing in the veneer surrounding the U.S. and its place at the top of the world hierarchy. Throughout the 20th century, the United States has held its own as other countries rose up, creating a possible challenge to the American way of life: the German military machine in World War-I and World War-II, the Soviet Union and communism in the Cold War, Japan in WW-II and later as the leader in consumer electronic technology. And although the United States had been humbled at times by other nations, e.g., the Vietnamese and North Koreans, it was not until 1989 that an event occurred which had the potential to shake the foundations of American society.

The Eastern Europeans, suddenly out from under the shadow of the Iron Curtain, elected to embrace capitalist ideals, and the floodgates of a free market economy burst open with tremendous force. Furthermore, Eastern Europeans were ambitious, hard working, and motivated group so recognized as having some of the highest education standards in the world.

As economic reform was spreading in Europe, some interested observers were taking note in Asia. India is viewed as a rising economic superpower today, but as recently as 1991, it was in dire financial straits. Economic liberalization opened India's doors to foreign investors and did away with much of the bureaucratic red tape that had impeded business growth.

Before India began welcoming foreign trade and investors, its



economic growth rate hovered around 3%. Three years after the 1991 reforms, the rate of growth jumped to 7%¹⁷, India began its rise to power by filling a customer service need in the information technology sector - call centers. Information technology makes it easy to move work to the worker, and American workers cannot compete in a global economy because they cost too much. Every year, more major U.S. corporations move at least part of their business overseas to India and places like it. As the skill level of overseas workers continues to increase, more jobs that are considered high skill/high wage/high prestige in the United States will go abroad as well.

India is playing an increasingly important role in information technology innovation. Motorola, Hewlett-Packard, Cisco Systems, and other technology giants rely on their Indian employees to design software platforms and futuristic multimedia features for next-generation devices.¹⁸ "To get rich is glorious," declared China's leader in 1977, signifying the opening of the world's most populous country to international trade. In China today, there is no question that communist ideology takes a backseat to capitalism for economic growth. China's ascension as an economic empire dwarfs that of the United States during its rise to power. For the past two decades, China's average annual economic growth has been an incredible rate of 9.5%.¹⁹

In contrast, the United States has nine, and all of Europe has 36. The lowest estimate of the number of Chinese who moved to the cities equals the number of people in the U.S. work force²⁰. China and India inspire awe with their size and ability to generate resources. Countries with large populations and cheap labor naturally attract business and enterprise domestically and internationally.

Together, China and India represent a formidable threat to the United States leadership position in the global marketplace. What makes them more potent together is that their strengths complement each other. China will remain dominant in mass manufacturing, continue to build electronics and heavy industrial plants, and develop its biotech research industry. India will continue its rise as a power in information technology through software design and service as well as its growing precision industry²¹. The meteoric rise of India and China has happened so quickly that most Americans have not really given much thought to what it means to them and their way of life. The United States can take actions that would improve its chances of, if not remaining the sole superpower, at least reserving a seat at the head table. The race for the top will be won by the younger generations. Is the U.S. education system investing in its future by preparing students to compete successfully in this race? The answer is no. The developing nations in Asia and Eastern Europe place a premium on educating students to excel in industries that will drive the future global marketplace. While the number of scientists and engineers who graduate from Indian and Chinese universities is increasing, U.S. universities are awarding fewer degrees in science and engineering every year, and many of them go to international students. Not only must U.S. education restructure its standards to reflect relevant



skills and knowledge for a global economy, it must also overcome a culture of apathy and complacency that impedes serious education reform.

China and India are churning out large numbers of well-educated students armed with the skills that are necessary to compete in and drive an economy based on information and technology.

The U.S. economy will suffer while traditionally poor countries grow richer, distributing wealth more evenly around the world²². As a result, China, India, the poorer countries of Eastern Europe, and the rest of the world will find that they have achieved what they have always envied in the United States — a middle class. In this scenario, the middle class quality of life to which Americans have become accustomed and which the younger generations expect to achieve as a bare minimum will be history.

Western Civilization in spite of its tall claims to support diversity is only promoting a worldwide monoculture the same basic values, institutions and points of view for everyone which it calls 'Globalization.' The brutal and stark truth is that western culture, with its declared pursuit of markets and commodities eliminates all true culture, which is based on quality and not quantity. It creates a culture of filthy lucre and lust for money all the way that submerges any true culture of refinement or spirituality a dismal culture in which everything can be bought and sold, possessed or capitalized on. All our capitalists and businessmen in India today are gloating and bloating about the ever rising tide of consumerism and consumer culture brought about by the ruthless march of Globalization. This in my view constitutes the greatest assault on Hindu culture and Hindu society by the draconian dragon of gargantuan Globalization²³.

Hence, everybody wants to be supreme in a way, It is the most dangerous part of the evolution of global economy. If we truly value our children as our greatest national resource, we must invest in their future. The U.S. may not have the massive human resource numbers as in China or India, but education can be the great equalizer. The United States has proven that it could invest in education in the past; the return being that it became the most powerful nation on Earth. It must summon the will to do so again. This means providing better classrooms in all regions of the country, raising educational standards to reflect the relevancy of the times, and restoring a sense of national pride in our education system. People around the globe are more connected to each other today than ever before in the history of mankind. Information and money flow more quickly than ever. Goods and services produced in one part of the world are increasingly available in all parts of the world. International travel is more frequent. International communication is commonplace. But, meanwhile this race of supremacy will destroy cultural, religious and spiritual part of our own world.



CONCLUSION

In submission, Globalization in today's economic order provides us with Malnutrition, unemployment; Income disparity, more rich in the world etc., as well as mythological, cultural, religious, spiritual and social overlaps have been existed in the era of Globalization. Globalization demands a modern society characterized by, among other things, a comparatively high degree of urbanization, commercialization, industrialization, widespread literacy, a high per capita income, extensive geographical and social mobility, a pervasive mass communications network and the widespread participation of its members in economic, political and social process. In sum, the present study is not a plea for either Culture or Spirituality or for Globalization alone. Cultural creativity in a tradition is possessed of values and dangers. It is important to approach Globalization in a critical manner so that its new sensibilities can be evaluated and, where positive, promoted. To do so, however, requires a rich sense of what it means to be human. This must be both metaphysically grounded with the sense of being and dialogically open to humankind and nature. It is commonly understood that each culture has specific, existential dimensions; each distinguishes itself geographically, linguistically, ethnically and psychologically as a distinct world and human conception with a characteristic sensitivity to history. This provides each culture with a specific individuality, personality, identity and particularity. These are conditions for the existence and survival of cultures. Starting from this ontological determinants of culture, we may conclude that any cultural work, before 'belonging to the whole of mankind' or before becoming a common good, belongs to a specific culture, people, nation, ethnic group as both its creator and receiver. This concrete affiliation, determined by specific ontological circumstances gives cultures an irreducible character as distinct but irreducible realities. Hence, we find there is a close relationship between modernity, human development and human resource development. Human development implies the process of enlarging people's choices, level of well-being and achievement. Besides satisfying people's basic needs, it also focuses on the production and distribution of commodities and the expansion as well as use of human capabilities. Human development ensures three basic requirements of the people: to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to resources for a decent standard of living. Human resources development, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with the means of development rather than the ends of development.

Indian culture which in effect means Hindu culture, Hindu religion, Hindu society, Hindu civilization, Hindu way of life are under the lethal threat of the ruthless forces of Globalization today. What went by the name of Colonialism in classical history textbooks produced in the days of British Raj has been replaced today by the synonym of Globalization. The unbridled expansion of western culture has continued at an accelerated rate along with the denigration and decline of Hindu culture, civilization, religion, art, literature and customs. This new Colonialism has taken on several new faces or rather put on new masks. It cleverly masquerades itself through labels and



slogans like democracy, humanitarian rights, gender equality, internationalism, free trade and humanitarianism. In the name of modernization and Globalization it pretends to be uplifting peoples whom it is really exploiting. This is not very different in either kind or intent from old Western Colonialism British Imperialism in the Indian context which vaunted itself as the benign bringer of Civilization and culture to the uncivilized world. It was given the glorious title of ‘White Man’s Burden’.

We live in an intensely interdependent world in which all the earth’s peoples with their immense differences of culture and historical experience are compressed together in instant communication. We face today a world of almost infinite promise which is also a world of terminal danger. This phenomenon has been titled Globalization. The Era of Globalization is fast becoming the preferred term for describing the current times. Just as the Depression, the Cold War Era, the Space Age, and the Roaring 20’s are used to describe particular periods of history; Globalization describes the political, economic, and cultural atmosphere of today. While some people think of Globalization as primarily a synonym for global business, it is much more than that. The same forces that allow businesses to operate as if national borders did not exist also allow social activists, labour organizers, journalists, academics, international terrorists and many others to work on a global stage. In the end Globalization is like Butterfly with all colours, touch one you get all, somebody said:

Titli hamne daboch li tumare naam ki,

Rang kainat ke mutthi mei aa gay.

¹ *Culture Cauldron*, Singh, Ranjeni A., the Speaking Tree, a Times of India Publication, March, 2011.

² Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, Ballantine Books, 1995.

³ Quoted in Nederveen Pieterse’s *Globalization and Culture*, 42-43.

⁴ *ibid*, 44.

⁵ *ibid* 44.

⁶ *ibid*, 46.

⁷ Robert Holton, “*Globalization’s Cultural Consequences*”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 570, July 2000, 142.

⁸ Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture*, 49.

⁹ Holton, “*Globalization’s Cultural Consequences*”, 142.

¹⁰ *ibid*, 143.

¹¹ *ibid*, 148.

¹² Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture*, 57.

¹³ *ibid*, 57.

¹⁴ Holton, “*Globalization’s Cultural Consequences*”, 150.



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