



Cosmopolitanism and Culture- A special reference to India

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Abstract: *As we all know, Cosmopolitanism may simply refer to more inclusive and globalised moral, culture, economic, and political relationships between nations or individuals of different nations. On the other hand culture can be defined as the assemblage of values, beliefs, traditions and different practices of certain groups of life which is transmitted from one generation to the next and sometimes some greater or lesser modification is made in it. Cosmopolitanism has gradually been influencing the culture around the world. India is no exception to it. It has also made culture a tool for sheer entertainment to the masses by providing a high profit as a part of commodity production. It is due to cosmopolitanism, India is losing its glory. In this paper, I will try to explicate the inherent economic interests of the process of cosmopolitanism and its exploitation of culture.*

Keywords: *Political, Belief, Commodity, Traditions.*

Cosmopolitanism is the concept where all the communities of this world should be integrated to a single community. Cosmopolitanism is a state of readiness for adaptability to make way into the cultures of others. It also refers to the semiotic domain of public consciousness which envisages the characteristics of modern social structure. It removes the distance between events and people. It also develops the curiosity to consume, develop and adapt places, people and cultures. People become interested to take risks in encountering others and appreciate them. Cosmopolitanism has always made its way to different cultures where cultures are continuously modified, updated, altered and also sometimes reshaped. Cosmopolitanism has also influenced the individuals and society at large. It has made identity of the individual flexible as it has made way for various opportunities for people to forge new identity. In this process, cosmopolitanism has submerged both the individuals and society into diverse cultural sources. Hence, with diverse cultural resources and materials, individuals now have availability of options to make life as per their choices. It is important to mention here that cosmopolitanism is popularized as moral response, where it emphasizes those moral positions of all the communities around the globe should be defined in a same way, and no preference should therefore be given to any particular cultural, political, linguistic community.

Therefore, cosmopolitanism as a concept is very much pertinent in today's world. There are many modern academics like Martha Nussbaum, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Peter Kemp, Daniel Archibugi, and David Held have defined cosmopolitan theories in their writings. Those thinkers have different perspectives in describing and defining their cosmopolitan ideals. But the very basic of cosmopolitan ideals remain the same in all the theories and policies.

Cosmopolitanism, Globalization and Culture

Cosmopolitanism contributes to the process of globalization by providing opportunities to experience a greater range of cultural influences and traditions. Global risk always requires cosmopolitan thinking and international solutions. It is important to mention here that cosmopolitanism does not mean giving up own identity or national culture. Because it is not a condition. Following cosmopolitanism only adhere to the principle of openness to other cultures and cultural experiences by being free from national limitations or prejudices. Globalization can accelerate this transition because the very basic principle of globalization is to enable us to experience a plurality of cultural influences. So, ultimately globalization reduces cultural differentiations. The different nomenclatures of globalization stimulate cosmopolitanism in many terms. Global migration, hybridization, development of communication and technology and increased cultural amalgamations- all have strengthened cosmopolitan dispositions through globalizing process. So, globalization encourages the growth of cosmopolitan culture in different terms.

Culture can be defined as the assemblage of values, beliefs, traditions and different practices of certain groups of people. It is inherited from one generation to the next and sometimes there are some alterations in it. Culture is also regarded as the ideological manifestations of the economic base where politics of a given society stands on. At this moment, consciousness of people about their democratic rights is at peak, so coercive means is completely impossible to suppress their voices. So, modes are



evolved by the ruling classes to continue suppression through propaganda and manipulated discourses. It is seen that culture is made into a marketable commodity which is against human bonds and humanity. It means that cultural pursuits are linked with market and marketing propaganda. It has made culture a form of entertainment to the masses by providing a high profit as a part of commodity production. So, the real essence of the culture is at lost. The propaganda is to benefit corporations and the elimination of people oriented programs has led to the exploitation of people. Now production is totally based on commercial values without giving importance to human values. Things like knowledge, virtue and even personal identity becomes commodity and personal integrity loses its value. The Capitalists forces have made an image of decomposed personality with commoditized spirit by reshaping cultural aspects of the lives of the individuals. These indicate commoditization of original human culture and cosmopolitanism. This kind of cultural autonomy is being presented by the neo-liberalism through fostering cosmopolitan ideology and it is devoid of the sense of the self. Again the issue of identity also assumes significance in the process of cosmopolitanism and through it, to the process of globalization. Because it impact upon the social, cultural and economic life of the people in different societies. It generally differs from society to society due to difference of historicity, an initial condition which characterizes their society and culture.

The Impact of Cosmopolitanism

India is a land of diversity and it is inherited from its colonial rule, religious movements and spiritual experiences. As we know, the cultural diversity of India is unique in and it is deep rooted in ancient times. Indian civilization was first witnessed Vedic period and the rise of Buddhism and Jainism added a new aura. Further with the rise of Bhakti movement, Indian civilization got a new aspect. Unity in diversity has always been used in India to strengthen the peaceful co-existence. But with the advent of globalization in 21st century, market forces emerged which have altered the diversity specially the cultural diversities. The process of globalization has augmented the minimization of diversity as it strive for transcending pre-existing political, economic and most importantly cultural barriers. For example, in a remotest village, a youth choose to prefer to wear western cloth and to eat Hakka noodles as against the local clothing or local food. When looking at the consequences of cosmopolitanism, it seems to be the case that the deeply rooted traditions and values in India are changing. But it is also seen that cosmopolitan disposition is increasing, yet there are modern, urbanized Indians living along with immemorial traditions and values. Even though the Indians are becoming modernized and are embracing the western values, it seems to be the case that they still hold on to some of their traditions, including their religion which is still important when it comes to a change of values in a society. The claim for the necessity of cosmopolitanism arises to strengthen the international market by an international state, which lead to the growth of global capitalism. In third world countries, the societies and the communities are overwhelmed with the influx of Westernized culture, which has resulted into displacement of age old cultural history and traditions.

The Indian society has some unique features which include caste based plurality of communities, plurality of cultural structures and styles at the regional levels. At the same time, India is very much adaptable to other cultural traditions through centuries. The contact with the western civilization which has overwhelming influence on its culture for the reason that the institutional and cultural innovations they introduced in the society had an enduring appeal to the Indian elite as a paradigm of modernization. But on one hand, cosmopolitan outlook and influence of globalization extends the scope of commercialization of culture, and on the other hand, it also threatens the identity of local cultures by appropriating culture from people's life to the market situation.

While reality differs from one country to another, in recent years there have been similar trends in India like the media systems of many western states. Now, most part of the media comes under private ownership. Public media is gradually disappearing due to limited funding and hence it is forced to adopt commercial practices in order to generate income. Media content has become a product not different from other products and ownership is increasingly held by giant corporations rather than families, social organizations or local entities. As a result, media is constantly guided by consideration of profit and not by ideals of public good or conservation of people's culture. It is for the reason that the large part of the income in media come from advertisers not from viewers. So, its main business centered on selling. Quality cultural contents appear insufficiently in the media stems from relatively high productions costs they entail. This leads broadcasters to favor programs that maintain high ratings, but cost less to produce. They fear for the reason that viewership will be lost because it is bored by such contents. It is disturbing fact to the cultural minority in India (like any other country) who are in vulnerable as regards to their ability to preserve their identity from cultural assimilation.

The post cold war era has led to rapid development of communication technology. A new trend emerged as a rapid global expansion of multinational media corporations and the culture they promote in the third world country like India. The amount of time of exposure to programs on foreign channels and its impact on the society has been one of the major concerns all over the country. Because these types of presentation of social roles are sometimes create a problem for cultures that differ in their values



from the place where these programs originate. So, youth who consume foreign media content are confused with the values projected in foreign programs and the ones prevailing in the society. They generally prefer the foreign programs to indigenous programs. So, critics assert that imported media had undermined the traditional values and cross-cultural disruption which lead to loss of identity in developing societies (including India). There is a Hindi saying 'Jo dikhta hain, wohi bikta hain' (Only that sells which is ostentatiously displayed). It signifies the sad reality of cosmopolitan culture of media in this globalized world.

When we estimate the realities of a cosmopolitan culture through witnessing the effects of the modern media with the predominance of cosmopolitan ideology, one can see the teleological end of cosmopolitanism in the hands of global capitalism. The cosmopolitanism in terms of media offers an alternative to the homogenizing aspects of globalization. So, the original of cultures submerged in capitalist cultures through assimilation and loses its original zeal and flavor.

Moreover, with globalization processes, the notion of the cosmopolitan reshapes and redefined the relationship between local and the global in media technologies and leads to the increase in the consumption of culturally different foreign products, lifestyle and other basic needs. It created hybridization of culture and change the very fabric of society and the power relation between the masses and the government. Furthermore, this clash also estranged individuals from the real self which results into loss of mass culture.

Conclusion

It is important to say that culture is the identity of a community in front of the global community and it should be preserved and safeguarded for its growth and development. Preservation is a highly important step that needs to be seriously explored today as it is high time to implement necessary and adequate steps for preserving our cultural heritage for the sake of future generations. Preservation needs proper documentation of our cultural heritage and resources. The documentation process helps in making comparisons about the changing trends and versions of our cultures at different points of time in future. If we document a certain prevalent cultural aspect in audio-visual form, then after a decade or so, when there will be a interest in reviewing them or comparing them with the then prevailing version, it will become a great help to understand them.

Our culture and heritage should be enriched by healthy and meaningful inputs from others from time to time and thereby are able to deliver a synthesized cultural entity for the future generations. To conclude, culture as a way of human life is constantly undergoing change. Certain developments in modern times have helped to accelerate this process of change. Faced with that inevitability, we should not lose sight of a better kind of cosmopolitanism, an exchange among equals in which cultures borrow from each other judiciously and selectively, and they should not be the brand names, but good ideas.

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