Vibrant India in the view of Globalization

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Abstract: *Globalisation is the ongoing process that is linking people, neighbourhoods, cities, regions and countries much more closely together than they have ever been before. This has resulted in our lives being intertwined with people in all parts of the world via the food we eat, the clothing we wear, the music we listen to, the information we get and the ideas we hold. Globalization has a wide role to play worldwide. It has left back its footprints at every sphere of life. Not only in India, but the interchange of world views and ideas has resulted in a major transformation of the lifestyle and living standard of people globally. Today in many developing countries insufficient progress in science and technology is considered to be the chief reason for general backwardness; on the contrary, many in the industrially advanced societies hold unfettered technological progress as the roots of all social ills. Is it really possible that all social and political upheavals of the past decades are the by-product of thoughtless advance in technology? Does it make sense to think of technology as an 'inhumane force' that has somehow managed to throw 'human relations' into disorder and chaos?*

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Introduction:

Globalisation is the ongoing process that is linking people, neighbourhoods, cities, regions and countries much more closely together than they have ever been before. This has resulted in our lives being intertwined with people in all parts of the world via the food we eat, the clothing we wear, the music we listen to, the information we get and the ideas we hold. Globalization has a wide role to play worldwide. It has left back its footprints at every sphere of life. Not only in India, but the interchange of world views and ideas has resulted in a major transformation of the lifestyle and living standard of people globally. Indian culture is no bar to this transformation process. Our deep rooted traditions and customs have loosened up their hold with the emergence of globalization. India has a rich cultural background and pride of its culture is famous throughout the world. Globalization has not only inculcated the westernization in India, but conversely the Indian culture has also spread its impact globally. Culture and traditions of any geographic region hold a special significance with respect to its uniqueness and that is the differentiating factor for a population within a geographic boundary from the other. This uniqueness has been disturbed to the varying degrees in lieu of globalization. Such an impact is very much pronounced when they hit a developing country like India.

Today in many developing countries insufficient progress in science and technology is considered to be the chief reason for general backwardness; on the contrary, many in the industrially advanced societies hold unfettered technological progress as the roots of all social ills. Is it really possible that all social and political upheavals of the past

decades are the byproduct of thoughtless advance in technology? Does it make sense to think of technology as an 'inhumane force' that has somehow managed to throw 'human relations' into disorder and chaos?

Are we faced with a kind of technological determinism that places man and society in a particular direction with no discernible horizon? Or is it after all possible that technology is independent, neutral and free of any values, whose benefits and faults are chiefly by the use to which it is put by man? Is it possible for traditional societies to import technology and then try to weave it into their own cultural fabric? Does technology cause alienation? Or is it, as an Iranian thinker has put it, a necessary evil equally harmful in presence as in absence?

Finally, how are we equipped, the people of the Third World, to cope with the great power that technology is? And of course a host of other questions that are fashioned ever anew with respect to technology.

The friction between technological development and the preservation of cultural values, in particular and the influence of the former upon the course of social and cultural changes have been a great source of controversy, the consideration of which is obviously beyond this assignment. Our main objective here is to discuss the cultural aspect of technology and the effect it has had on the cultural identity of the Third World with respect to India.

Today, human life is an industrial life. In this life which is governed by technical relations, all products are interrelated and interdependent, where the purchase of a product commits one to the purchase of another. Technology advances constantly and rapidly; what has been useful and favoured one day runs out of style next day. The Evolutionists introduced technology as the major component of culture and put the other components at second place holding that all the components of culture are affected by technology. In this regard Leslie White has introduced the most important theory on technological determinism. According to him not only technology determines the direction of cultural development, but it also determines the need for building social foundation. In fact technological determinism assumes that technological innovation is the driving force behind social change imposing its own logic on the social actors and their relations.

To discuss the effects of Globalisation on our culture, first of all we must be familiar with the term globalization. Globalisation is the current buzzword for the 'shrinking' of our planet. Some historians of the 21st century consider the crumbling of the Berlin Wall in 1989 - the symbol for the break-up of the Soviet empire - a milestone along the road to globalisation. The most widely recognised symbol of the globalisation system is the World Wide Web, which unites everyone. It is impossible to talk of the 21st century without recognising the backdrop of the phenomenon of globalisation. The term 'globalisation' is also used to denote 'global economic integration', which despite all its problems, contradictions and criticism, now appears to be inevitable, built as it is on the backs of an irreversible 'technological globalisation process' and an integrated global communications systems. This process

will increase world trade and, hopefully, global wealth, too. Globalisation, then, is a slow and relatively consistent process, which requires permanent structural change.

To address the question of technology and its place in Indian culture, we first need to address the very basic questions "What is Culture?" and "What is Indian Culture?" The answer to the first may not be as simple as it appears. Even Webster's Dictionary offers many choices: "civilising tradition, folklore, instruction, law, custom, knowledge, arts, sciences, education, mores." The true definition of culture most likely lies in a combination of each of these possibilities: a mixture of the mental, physical, intellectual and creative aspects of a society. As with any mixture, this view bases itself in movement - the interaction of these collective parts to create a nebulous whole called "culture."

Coming to Indian culture, it is only after we have found out the features of Indian culture that make it Indian and distinguish it from other non-Indian cultures, can we aim to understand the role that technology has in our ideas, conceptions, qualities, relationships and courtesies - the Web of Beliefs that we call our culture. Though Indian culture has evolved through the ages and continues to change, there are certain essential aspects, which have remained the same. These are the features of Indian culture that have remained over the ages, starting from the days of Bhimbetka, and coming right up to the (post) modern society we live in today.

Role of Technology: Technology has been the main reasons for popularising the trend of "Globalisation". Indeed, modern inventions like the Internet and the WWW are widely attributed as the primary agents in making this world a smaller place and leading to the coinage of such terms as "Global Village". It is technology that serves as an asset when it comes to endowing a specific culture with universal appeal. But that appeal may be totally superficial. As an example, let us take the case of the US, which has the undeniable edge of American media translation. So far, electronic translation has proved unable to capture the richness of language. All the more so with the growing dependence on digital programming which, to one extent or another, limits the ability to reproduce the underlying nuances of language. By reducing the connotations of words to their apparent meaning, electronic translation has only superficially and artificially bridged the differences between cultures.

While all this interconnected fabric of tissue, electrons, metal, fibre optics, words and energy has mammoth potential for improving the human condition, it also can disrupt the lives of innocent people. Cultures in poor countries are under siege from the forces of global economic integration. Today's flow of culture is unbalanced, heavily weighted in one direction, from rich countries to poor. People's lives are being linked more deeply, intensely and immediately than ever before as distance, time and borders diminish. The "unevenness" of globalisation and open markets are contributing to cultural insecurity in poorer nations like ours, which have removed barriers against imports of art and entertainment from

the West. At the same time, culture has become a commodity to be sold in the form of handicrafts, music, books, films and tourism.

The entertainment industry and other forms of media if scrutinised closely raise many deep questions and issues. It is impossible to imagine a world without presence of media. It has penetrated our lives in every respect and one is constantly bombarded by useful, useless and degrading information. One may even not want to be involved with media, but it hardly matters. Media is not a carpet which only the rich tread, but is also accessible in (at least in one of its many forms) to "the less fortunate ones" and no one lies outside its influence. Which is why globalisation (read westernisation) of media has a very deep impact on our age old cultural traditions. A majority of the media products are stuffed with answers, as if it is their task to inform people and then tell them how to act. This position that the media takes is a top-down one, and belittles the wisdom and knowledge that people possess and their understanding of things. Also, the media which we are exposed to in the present day scenario is governed by influences of a largely different culture. This primarily has an effect of presenting before us foreign cultural values that are in direct conflict with our values and ethics. The law of entropy (a natural tendency towards disorder) applies quite well in our case, and most of the population follows the easier path of adopting less moral stances leading to the blind aping of the west.

Conclusion

While the field of culture is obviously not the field of information, the achievements of the information age are now determining the parameters of culture. The globalisation of information provides channels of communication and interaction between cultures. The latest such channel is the Internet, the global network of electronic communication which, by cancelling distances of time and space, has contracted the planet and accelerated history, with all the implications this carries for culture. One implication is the need for a universal idiom that can overcome language barriers, whether by adopting an existing language (English) or by inventing a new language for this purpose. Technology has now created the possibility and even the likelihood of a global culture. The Internet, fax machines, satellites, and cable TV have swept away the old national cultural boundaries. Global entertainment companies shape understandings and dreams of ordinary citizens, wherever they live. Will our culture, then, inevitably fall victim to a global "consumer" culture? Will English eradicate all our languages? Will consumer values overwhelm Indians' sense of community and social solidarity? Or, more optimistically, will a common culture lead the way to greater shared values and political unity? The road ahead – what India can and should do Conscious of the composite and fragile nature of its own cultural identity, India must today show exemplary responsibility where its own cultural heritage is concerned, and with regards to its present day and future cultural life. This responsibility must involve a greater sensitivity in its contacts with other cultures. Inescapably bound up in permanent exchanges with other evolving cultures, the dynamics

of Indian culture can only be impoverished and compromised by misguided protectionism. If public authorities in India leave the field open to the economic interests of the "global players" in the vital sectors of information and communication, they must, in the interests of preserving our societies' cultural identity, establish norms that will ensure the beneficial use of new technologies. In order to prevent an irreversible impoverishment of Indian culture, the control of content and of its communication cannot be left to the sole ambitions of the industrial and commercial parties. Yet, at the same time, faced with the enormous initiatives launched by the United States we also feel deep concern regarding the preservation of cultural expressions and identities in India. Waiting for the wave of multimedia products to unfurl, products of more or less limited value, designed, fabricated and homogenised to be easily sold on the world market, this concern anticipates the threat of a profound upheaval in the Indian media landscape; thanks to the powerful instrument which the information highways represent, this landscape could be submerged by an ocean of images of which only the smallest proportion has any valuable content.

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