GLOBALIZATION: AN AGE OLD PROCESS

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Abstract –
Humans have interacted over long distances for thousands of years. The over-land '*Silk Road'* that connected Asia, Africa and Europe is a good example of effective and successful international exchange that existed in the *'Old World'*.
Roland Robertson, Professor of Sociology at University of Aberdeen, defined *'globalization'* as *"the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole"* (1992).
Globalization has been described as a revolution that is affecting all of human society (Sassen 1996, 1998). Robert Schaeffer (2009) observes that – "We live in a time of global change. But people experience change in different ways. Global change ….affects some people more than others, and it can have different consequences – good and bad – for people in different settings".
As a result of globalization, many people are influenced by more than a single culture.
The probable impact of globalization is not predictable always.We are free to explore the possibilities of utilizing the advanced technology for conservation of our cultural heritage.

1. Prologue& Introduction -

In the process of *adaptation* and *a continuous search for sustainable source of livelihood,* human populations *have been moving from one place to another, since ages.* Humans have interacted over long distances for thousands of years. The over-land '*Silk Road'*that connected Asia, Africa and Europe is a good example of effective and successful international exchange that existed in the *'Old World'*. Philosophy, religion, language, the arts, and other aspects of culture spread and mixed as nations exchanged products and ideas. In the 15th and 16th centuries, Europeans made important discoveries in their explorations of the oceans, including the beginning of trans- Atlantic travel to the *'New World'* of the Americas. Global movement of people, goods, and ideas expanded significantly in the following centuries. Early in the 19th century, the development of new forms of transportation (such as the steam-ship and rail-roads) and telecommunications that 'compressed' time and space for increasingly rapid rates of global interchange (Rourke and Williamson, 2000). In the 20th century, roads, rail-roads and airlines made transportation even faster. The advent of electronic communications, most notably mobile phones and the Internet, connected billions of people in new ways, leading into the 21st century.

2. Globalization -

Globalization is the process of interaction among the countries of the world in order to develop the global economy. Globalization refers to the integration of economies and societies all over the world. Globalization involves technological, economic, political, and cultural exchanges made possible largely *by increasing mobility,* as a result of advancement in communication, transportation and infrastructure (http://hotbabefatchicks.hubpages.com).

According to the Etymology Dictionary, the term *globalization* is derived from the word *globalize*, which refers to the emergence of an international network of social and economic systems. One of the earliest known usages of the term *'globalization',* as the noun was in 1930, in a publication titled '*Towards New Education'* where *'globalization'* denoted a holistic view of human experience in education (*Oxford English Dictionary,* 2009). A related term, *'corporate giants',* was coined by Charles Taze Russell in 1897 (http://www.pastor-russell.com), to refer to the largely national trusts and other large enterprises of the time. By the 1960s, both the terms – *'corporate giants'* and *'globalization'* began to be used as synonyms by economists and other social scientists. It then reached the mainstream press in the later half of the 1980s. Since its inception, the concept of *'globalization'* has inspired competing definitions and interpretations, with antecedents dating back to the great movements of trade and empires across Asia and the Indian Ocean from the 15th century onwards. Due to the complexity of the concept, research projects, articles, and discussions often remain focused on a single aspect of *'globalization'* (Al-Rodhan and Gerard, 2006).

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3. Globalization: Social and Cultural Dimensions –

The simplest definition of Culture is – *'a way of life'* - that includes religion, spirituality, rituals, language, morals, values, marriage, family, kinship, social/ cultural norms including food habits and so on. An important and rather legitimate point that is often raised against globalization, is derived from its perceived impact on local culture. The influences of Western culture through cinema, television, radio and advertisements through electronic media - are considered to be competing with different cultures. This process is often blamed for promoting increasing risk behaviors such as unhealthy food habits, consumption of alcohol, and smoking. Globalization is also considered to be associated with increasing social conflict, loss of identity, dislocation, unrest and dissatisfaction. It is advocated that greater cultural exchange is likely to increase tolerance and understanding. It is argued that more access to information has a potential to promote a lifestyle leading to social changes with health benefits, such as gender equality and greater respect for human rights.

There is genuine concern that huge American corporations such as McDonald's, with their equally massive advertising and publicity budgets, are able to set up operations almost anywhere they wish, and exert strong influence on local character and lifestyles. No matter where we are, we have easy access to - view Hollywood movies; eat American/ Italian/ Chinese/ Continental food; get apples from Washington/ Chile/ China/ Africa; get grapes from New Zealand/ Australia; wear foreign garments; electronic gadgets from Japan/ Korea/ Taiwan/ China.

Spread of globalization is considered to have a potential marginalization of local cultures by virtue of homogenizing effect in different societies across the globe. Effect of globalizations on local cultures is considered to be a vital dimension by many countries. The British/ German/ French/ Indians/ Arabs/ Iranians/ Japanese/ Chinese - have problems accepting the domination of American culture in the process of globalization. The huge multitude of peoples from different countries, are observed to be attracted by big American multi-nationals such as Coca-Cola, McDonald's, KFC, American Pizza, Domino's etc. This is an evidence of the immense power of multinational corporations to influence the clientele across the globe.

Acceptance of multi-national products by clientele across the globe involves the process of culture change, basically at two levels. Primarily there is a change which leads to the *'acceptance of foreign products including food items'.* Acceptance of multi-national products including food items further leads to *'adaptive culture changes'.*

Food in Cultural context is an extremely vast topic. In the present context, specific aspects have been discussed in brief to illustrate the important role of socio-cultural changes in the process of globalization.

In the Indian context, even today *'food'* is considered to be *'sacred'.* Many norms/ restrictions are associated with consumption of food and associated behavior. During the first few decades of the twentieth century, purchasing of food items or eating at joints where food was 'sold', was looked down upon by the society. These restrictions were mostly rooted in the concept of ritual pollution associated with the caste system in India. Consumption of 'bread' from bakeries was not acceptable and was largely looked down upon. It was during mid-fifties of the twentieth century, some highly educated/ elite families started consuming 'bread' from the bakeries. Gradually the 'others' in the society readily accepted the 'bread' from bakeries, as a product – useful for consumption. In those days, cakes from bakeries were not acceptable because the *'use of eggs'* in the cakes was '*not acceptable',* especially to the *'strict vegetarians'.* Within few years many elites 'got convinced' that they can consume eggs and still continue to be vegetarians. Very soon, few others in the society readily accepted to join those elites who had started the consumption of eggs. This acceptance further paved the way for easy acceptance of cakes/ other bakery products and purchase of food items/ eating at hotels/ other road-side eateries. It was certainly with *this background*, that the process of **McDonaldization* easily won the clientele in India. This includes different products/ brands such as KFC, American Pizza, Dominos, etc. This also includes Chinese food items which are highly popular in India.

*George Ritzer, as an outcome of his studies in 1998 and 2002, termed the phenomenon as – *'The McDonaldization of the Society'* – in 2008. He observes that – the innovations in the mass production and marketing of hamburgers that made the McDonald's restaurant chain so successful, have now become part of the emerging world culture. One can find a McDonald's outlet virtually anywhere in the world, serving essentially the same main items, along with local specialties to maintain contact with 'tradition'.

The process of socio-cultural change leading to the acceptance of - purchase of food items/ eating at hotels/ other road-side eateries have precipitated a new trend which indicates that when the people purchase food items/ eat at hotels/ other road-side eateries – they are not *'bothered'* about the caste identity of the owner/ the cooks who prepare the food items. Many vendors from Pune City, Pimpri– Chinchwad New Town, in Pune Metropolitan Region, and Nashik City were interviewed about their social background. Almost 80% of the vendors indicated that–

i.   They have immigrated in search of source of sustainable livelihood.
ii. After reaching Pune City/ Nashik City, they have entered the business of selling various fast food items including tea, snacks and fruit-plates/ fruit-juice.
iii. They operate this business with the help of hand-carts, which they park on the road-sides/ suitable junctions/ corners on the roads.
iv. During the informal discussion they indicated that – *"In our native villages, the high caste people would never accept food-items/ even water from us. We are extremely happy that in the city, those who visit our stalls, never enquire about our caste identity, in any manner whatsoever"*

In case of these immigrants, it is also observed that-

i. Some of the women are employed by some of the hotels/ caterers for preparing *'roti'* – (bread)/ and other food items.
ii. Some of the women are engaged as cooks, by some families.

It was stated that – *"those who readily engage these women for cooking food items, do not enquire about the caste identity of these women".*

Similarly, the food items marketed/ sold through different *'Mahila Bachat Gat'*- [Self Help Groups (for women)], are purchased by people without considering the caste identity of the women who have prepared the food products.

To a certain extent, these socio-cultural changes have contributed towards the beginning of secular society. This is an important step for the acceptance of the process of globalization.

As the world gets increasingly interconnected through globalization, a series of changes are taking place, some of which evade our attention mainly because we are more concerned about the economic and political impacts of the phenomenon. Life as we know it is changing.

Changes enter our lives through technology, consumer products, new thoughts, lifestyles and visions of others. In this sense, globalization is a social and cultural process in which individuals from different cultural backgrounds interact with each other in all spheres of life more intensively than before. This integration is increasingly exposing people to different ways of thinking, cultural values and new forms of family life. Women from traditional religious/conservative environments are required to go away from their family/ home to join the work-force in a different secular cultural environment. They may dress differently and may/ may not cover their heads/ put on formal western costume, in the corporate sector. Hence two culturally different worlds meet to be permanently changed.

Similarly, children are educated to participate in a world, which is different than that of their parents. Moreover, the impact of globalization on families is differential, depending on various factors, including where the family lives and the social class it belongs to.

One of the most profound impact of globalization is its valuable contribution to changing gender roles and securing women's place in the work-place. The empowerment of women in turn changes the hierarchical role distribution that works against women both in the family and in society at large. The increasing need for higher education becomes instrumental for increase in the enrolment and admissions of more women in the schools. With the acquisition of necessary qualifications and skills, the women successfully compete with men in the job market. This situation leads to a decrease in gender disparity and paves a way for gender equality even in traditional societies in different parts of the world.

All of these changes have substantial impacts on the family because the family is the strategic social unit where division of labor, social role play, collective decisions - for members and their future, their movements and development - are most important. Such decisions define the identities of family members and their interaction with the larger society.

Moreover, all of these decisions may change, be debated, be renegotiated and their conflicts resolved. In the present day context, not only societal, but even intra-familial issues are intensively affected by globalization, more than ever.

4. World Trade Organization & Convention on Cultural Diversity -

In response to an ongoing debate over whether trade in cultural products should be governed by different rules from those for other commercial products, and what role governments should play in protecting national identities in the face of globalization, the United Nations convened an international conference to discuss how to help countries protect their native cultures. Government delegates from over 180 countries have formulated draft of the Convention on Cultural Diversity (CCD). The Convention has strongly advocated –

i.   To keep *cultural goods such as films, plays, and music out of the realm of trade negotiations.
ii. These cultural goods are to be excluded from the 'free-trade' rules.
iii. The governments will be allowed to protect and support their cultural industries, and enshrine the "cultural exception" that European nations have defended in the international law.
iv. It would be an international legal agreement to implement the principle that culture cannot be reduced to a commodity.

The Convention on Cultural Diversity enjoys the broad support of NGOs and civil society groups who have argued that the CCD must not be subordinated to the World Trade Organization. The CCD is expected to support cultural and media diversity - both within and between the countries.

The process of globalization is inevitable. The probable impact of globalization is not predictable always. There is a need to judiciously control the process in such a way that the results are not – *'beyond our expectations'.* Tandon, indicates that - it is of utmost importance that we sit together with an open mind and define rules that will help shape the kind of world we want to leave for our children (2004).

* It is noteworthy that *'food'* is certainly *'Culture Sensitive'.*

1) It has been already stated Mcdonaldization was readily accepted in India. 'French-fries' became very popular among the clientele. Then came a piece of information about the *'oil'* used for frying, the popular item. There was a huge uproar throughout the country against Mcdonald's, for using 'animal-fat' as a medium for frying of French-fries. Mcdonald's immediately declared that in India they would use 'vegetable oil', instead of 'animal-fat'.
2) It has been already discussed that those who are strict vegetarians, do not touch regular cakes.
    In order to cater to the special needs of a group of clientele, *'egg-less cakes'* are available in almost all bakeries/ cake-shops in India.
3) Jain Community in India has specific prescriptions associated with *'food'.* It is observed that these prescriptions are carefully followed – not only in India, but even by the Hotels/ Restaurants in - USA/ Canada/ Europe.

5. World Trade Organization: Acceptance/ Non-acceptance of Terms at International Level -

Recently India has objected to certain provisions of the WTO, in the interest of the 'Food Security Act'. Food Security is necessary for the poor and marginal population, in India and other developing countries. On the contrary, it is observed that developed and rich countries have refused to acknowledge the food security proposal submitted by G-33 countries such as Indonesia, Brazil and China. This indicates that the developed and rich countries are not at all sensitive about the poor and marginalized population from developing countries (Times of India, Pune, Saturday, 2nd August, 2014).

This attitude of the developed and rich countries indicates that – *'the developing countries have to be careful about their own interest'.*

At this point it is noteworthy that the International Federation for Agriculture Research – an agency under United Nations *has completely supported India's rational approach to prefer food security of the people in the country* (*'Maharashtra Times',* Pune, Tuesday, 5th August, 2014).

6. *World: A Global Village -*

The ultramodern cyber and web based electronic telecommunication technology has drastically 'decreased the distances on the globe'. With this advancement the world has emerged as a *'global village'.* This term refers to the increased accessibility and contacts between - cultures, identities and views across the national boundaries as a result of availability of highly advanced modern infrastructure with electronic telecommunications. It is observed that

while the distances on the globe have drastically decreased, the distance between the individuals has surprisingly increased.

Global communications play an extremely important role in the social and cultural dimensions of globalization. The term refers to the use of new information communication technologies such as the Internet, mobile phones, e-mail, on-line transactions, net-banking etc. These technologies are becoming cheaper and more widely available. The increasing ease and speed of global communication, especially the electronic media has both direct and indirect influences on different aspects of human behavior as a result of information/ awareness as a result of exposure. For example, global advertising campaigns may influence healthy/ high risk behavior. Wide use of the Internet has a potential for access to useful information. For example, it is easier for health professionals to access and share knowledge, information, and ideas on health related issues.

This represents a positive view of globalization in which societies come closer together and develop shared secular values and interests.

One of the most interesting phenomena of globalization is the shaping of online communities. This process has led to the evolution of new identities for people around the world while disregarding where they live and what their nationality is. The *'netizens'* are widely using number of *'social-network sites'* such as *'face-book'.* The mobile phones have many applications such as *'Whats-App' or 'Skype'* in conjunction with internet. This is a new phase of acculturation. New ideas, new methods of work, good life and governance are being shared worldwide even in the most secluded parts of the globe. It is a fact that there are numerous instances of frauds in different online/ net-banking transactions. Hence, it is necessary for the government organizations and service providers to control all types of online frauds.

Despite advances in global communications, a massive *'information gap'* remains between developed and developing countries. In India, people in remote hilly forest regions continue to remain *'out of coverage area'* because many telecommunication companies are not interested in setting-up a net-work in these areas. In these areas the government owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has set up a net-work covering the 'tahasil head-quarter and few villages around the tahasil head-quarter'. All other villages in these areas do not have mobile network. Obviously all these villages do not have access to landline connection and internet connectivity.

7. Globalization: Electronic Media, Contents and Economy -

Ownership and influence over the contents of programs and the royalty for the commercial impact of different programs on electronic media is an important economic dimension. Moreover, the integration of global markets and communication channels have a potential for a much higher level of economic contribution.

8. Globalization: Certain Effects –

I. An increased foreign cultural presence can result into either of the following -

i. It might raise our level of understanding foreign culture and way of life. Such an understanding may contribute towards reducing conflicts, which are likely to arise from cultural misunderstanding.

ii. On the other hand, a better understanding of foreign culture may bolster our confidence and pride in our own culture and heritage.
This may enable people to stress cultural differences or rather similarities in more effective ways for greater mutual understanding of different cultures.
It is entirely possible that exposure to alternative ways of life and thought may help increase global awareness and appreciation of the unity of humankind in all its diversity. This, however, will not be achieved if only one side is being exposed. Cultural understanding, like everything else, is a two-way process.

II. Globalization has a potential to encourage a greater degree of individualism as people will be judged on the basis of merit and achievement. As a result of intense competition from multinational corporations, preference is given to group achievement over individual performance.

III. Globalization brings increased interaction and adaptation between cultures. As happens in interpersonal relationships, we usually learn and grow as we interact. Societies and Cultures get enhanced through interaction, observation, and mutual give and take.

IV. Globalization helps development of a plural society. Increased economic activity in developing countries has a potential for to promote a multitude of institutions, interest groups, industry groups, non-government organizations and civil society to protect and promote their own interests and thereby help in the creation of a pluralistic society.

9. Globalization: Some Advantages/ Disadvantages –

Some of the Socio-Cultural advantages and disadvantages of globalization - a worldwide phenomenon have been discussed below -

Advantages of Globalization:
    i.   The influx of information between two countries increases, especially those nations who do not have anything in common between them.
   ii.   Cultural intermingling increases and every nation tries to know more about the cultural preferences of other nations.
  iii.   After getting an exposure to certain things, people adopt the things they like.
  iv.   Socially we become more open and tolerant towards each other.
   v.   Those who live in the other parts of the world appear to be more approachable thanbefore.

Disadvantages of Globalization:
    i.   According to some experts, globalization along with the positive aspects is also leading to the incursion of negatives such as *'social disintegration'.*
   ii.   Rapid erosion of traditional values is certainly dangerous for any society.
        Globalization always poses the danger of - loss of *'cultural identity'* as Western ideas are always imposed upon the Eastern thoughts.
        *The tragic accident at the Union Carbide Plant at Bhopal, in December 1994 has proved to be highly devastating. It has been unfortunate that the victims could not get a befitting compensation in any way whatsoever.
    i.   The environmental degradation in Bhopal, in Madhya Pradesh, in India, has not been addressed properly. With this tragedy, many issues have emerged regarding the multi-national industries operating in developing countries. In such situations, the developing countries need to be extremely careful by properly addressing all the issues in the agreement documents.
    *(Daily *'Sakal',* Pune, Saturday, 2nd August, 2014).

10. Conclusion& Epilogue -

Today's societies are multi-cultural in themselves. This encompasses a multitude of varying ways of life and lifestyles. As a result of globalization, many people are influenced by more than a single culture. Globalization which is a phenomenon of uniformity assumes that – all cultures in the world are on the verge of becoming uniform. In some countries, the instability of personality, family and community are an outcome of the rapid erosion of absolute traditional values. Moreover, mass media/ electronic media/ advanced mode of communication/ internet cannot be blamed for social disintegration/ loss of cultural identity/ erosion of absolute traditional values. It is for us to judiciously make use of the available technology without disturbing our cultural norms and values.It is apparent that - globalization can lift people out of poverty, but the inequalities between groups get stronger.

The probable impact of globalization is not predictable always. Globalization is a phenomenon created through human activity that in turn constantly changes human activity/ behavior through a greater cultural understanding.

We are free to explore the possibilities of utilizing the advanced technology for conservation of our cultural heritage. While we accept globalization, there is a need to re-emphasize upon - the positive aspects of ones own traditions/ customs/ norms and absolute values in the domain of culture. This will be successful if each and every individual contributes positively. Each and every community certainly has an option of judiciously combine the positive aspects of their culture and the fruits of acceptance of socio-cultural changes through globalization.

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