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**T**his short paper is written in the context of contradictions that arise in the capitalist periphery where diverse forces and pressures question the premise of a common cultural heritage. Culture is a living, evolving entity and cultural diversity is more than a rainbow of myriad beliefs, attitudes, languages, customs and ways of living. Cultural diversity is in fact the most permanent thing in the passage of evolution of different cultures.

Culture is a system of values and norms that are shared among a group of people and when taken together, constitute a design for living. It is the entire social heritage of humankind. A subculture refers to the culture within culture. The existence of Dravidian culture, Punjabi culture, Marathi culture, Parsi culture, Anglo-Indian culture, etc. indicates the subcultures within the boundaries of Indian culture. Values are the bedrock of a culture. They are the abstract ideas about what a group believes to be good, right and desirable. They may include a society's attitudes towards such concepts as individual freedom, democracy, truth, justice, honesty, loyalty, social obligations, collective responsibility, the role of women, love, sex, marriage and so on. The values have emotional

significance attached to them. People may fight, argue and even die over values such as "freedom". While the norms are social rules and guidelines that prescribe appropriate behavior in particular situations. Norms can be further subdivided into two major categories: Folkways and Mores. Folkways are societal conventions viz. appropriate dress code, social manners, eating behaviors. Mores include society's attitudes towards theft, adultery, incest, etc. In America, for example, drinking alcohol is widely accepted whereas in Saudi Arabia the consumption of alcohol is punishable by law.

The five characteristics of culture are:

- a) *Cultures are inherently logical.* All cultures develop with integrity at their core. An absolute logic prevails over the system of values, beliefs and norms that constitute a culture. A key challenge is to learn to accept the logic of other cultures without judging them according to the very different logic of one's own culture.
- b) *Culture is communication.* Communication is more than the words in which the message is packaged. Verbal communication, for instance,

seldom counts for more than 20% of communication. The nonverbal 80%-greeting style, gestures, postures and so on - has certain culturally based meanings to the participants.

- c) *Culture is the basis for self-identity and community.* Culture is the answer for universal demand for self identity - i.e. How we communicate to the world what we are and what we believe. In primitive societies, the culture of the family or tribe provided the necessary trappings for identity. In modern societies, each person must continuously build his or her own identity through a choice of cultural outlays and refinements added to the primary culture. The kind of work we seek, the kind of company with which we associate - these are the major expressions of our self-identity. They help to keep us oriented to our environment so that we can function well and maintain a sense of continuity.
- d) *Culture is visible through the practices and behavior.* Practices - the things which people do reportedly to accomplish certain tasks of daily life and work are the most visible parts of the culture to outsiders. But they are only the tips of icebergs. The meaning behind the outward symbols and practices is incomprehensible unless we understand the culture's inherent logic. Even then, culture can be deeply appreciated only by its own members.
- e) *Cultures can adapt to outside forces.* Cultures can adapt when major outside forces demand changes in beliefs and behaviour. It is easier to eliminate a corporate culture than a professional or primary culture. The recent reversion to old cultural values and practices in Eastern Europe, for instance, following years of imposed communist culture, is a dramatic example of how resilient these primary and social cultures can be.

As evolutionary stages of man passed through Neanderthals, Cro-Magnon's to Homo Sapiens, man developed the capacity as well as the need to develop culture. Culture had no specific beginning. It came about haltingly and gradually. As early humans gathered in-groups for mutual support and protection the system of marriage, family and other social institutions evolved. Culture changes and grows through innovation, a complex process mainly involving inventions (such as the wheel, tools and implements, steam engine) and diffusion. According to sociologists, an invention is any recombination of existing cultural elements to produce something new. With each invention, the cultural base grew and the potential number of new combinations of cultural elements multiplied. These groups of people were scattered in different parts of the world, different cultural belts were formed in these areas which in the passage of evolution were influenced by various factors viz. social structure, religion, language, education, economic philosophy, political philosophy and borrowing of elements from other societies and culture.

*How do these factors influence the culture and lead to cultural diversity?*

- **Social structure:** A society's social structure refers to its basic social organization. Although there are many different aspects of social structure, two main dimensions stand out - a) the emphasis on an individual or a group, b) the social stratification.
  - a) While groups are found in all societies, they differ according to the degree to which the group is viewed as the primary means of social organization. In the value system of many Western societies an individual is the basic building block of any social organization. Individual achievement is

emphasized. In the U.S., for example, the emphasis placed on individual performance finds expression in an admiration of “*rugged individualism*” and entrepreneurship. One can argue that the dynamism of the U.S. economy owes much to the philosophy of individualism. However, the concept of job-hopping, lack of loyalty towards the organization, difficulty in the performance of the collective tasks are also the result of such societal beliefs. In contrast, in the countries like Japan the group is the primary unit of social organization. The group that he/she is associated with determines the status of an individual. This concept finds expression in the concept of loyalty, emphasis on team-work, lifetime employment, importance to family, work organization, etc. However, the primacy of the group is not always beneficial as it is said that the Japanese society is characterized by lack of dynamism and entrepreneurship.

- b) All societies are stratified on the basis of family background, occupation and income. In India, caste system is the manifestation of the stratification on the basis of the family background and occupation. Inter-class mobility in India is extremely difficult because of rigidity in the caste system. Whereas in U.S., such a class system exists - (the upper class, the lower class, the middle class) where the position of a person by birth can be changed by an individual's achievement. In Britain, the class system is very rigid and there are separate schools for children from different classes,

different accents of English and social norms for the upper, middle and lower classes. The British industry has been historically racked by large level of strikes, many of which have been depicted as “class warfare”.

- **Social Institutions:** The institution of family is the founding block of a society and its culture. It is as old as humankind is. The structure of family has been rapidly undergoing change in the wake of urbanization; mass movement of people due to economic reasons has led to a shift to nuclear families in many societies. But some less industrialized and urbanized societies still maintain the system of joint families. In fact, due to changing roles of women in the society many cultures have seen the breakdown of this social institution. Every second marriage in a country like Britain ends in divorce; there has been a rise in the single parenthood norm that may create more individualistic societies.
- **Religion :** Religion has existed in all times and places. The relationship between religion and culture is subtle, profound and complex. It is an organized set of values, beliefs and norms that are designed to lessen or explain the problems of human life. Based on religion the various belts have developed across the world viz. Christianity, Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist belts, which have also become bases of group identity. Cultural values and norms are similar in each belt following the same religion.

*Zoroastrianism* is the oldest organized religion dating back to ancient Iran circa 650 BC. Spitama Zarathustra founded it and he states that man's brain is too miniscule to understand God and so we must see God through the five elements of nature: fire,

water, sun, earth and wind. We must practice life to be worthy of God's blessings through good thoughts, good words and good deeds. Each being (man and animal) has a soul (atish or fire) which relates man to God. The usual greeting is *Khashno Taro Ahure Mazdao*, which like the Hindu *Namaste*, signifies that "I salute the God within you."

*Christianity* is the most widely practiced religion with 1 billion followers all over the world. It is further subdivided into Catholicism and Protestantism and various other smaller sects. According to Weber, there is a relationship between Protestantism and the emergence of modern capitalism. Weber argued that the Protestant ethics lay emphasis on hard work, wealth creation and frugality. This was the kind of value system needed to facilitate the development of capitalism. Also the Protestant ethics gives more freedom to the individual. The Catholic promise of salvation in the next world rather than this world did not foster the same kind of work ethic in the countries following the Catholic religion. This explains the economic backwardness of countries like Greece, Italy and other Eastern European countries.

*Islam* has 750 million adherents and is the second largest religion in the world. It enjoys nearly contiguous stretch of land from the northwest coast of Africa, through the Middle East, to China and Malaysia in the Far East. The Muslims live in the social structure that is shaped by Islamic values and norms of moral conduct. Muslim rituals require prayers five times a day, women should be dressed in a particular manner and they are subordinate to men, alcohol consumption is forbidden, they are required to give a part of their income in charity, exploitation and earning profit is forbidden, also there is prohibition on charging interest. These beliefs can in fact be held responsible for the lack of entrepreneurial activities in these countries.

*Hinduism* is the most ancient religion of the world. Hindus believe that the way to achieve salvation is to lead a severe ascetic lifestyle of material and physical self-denial, devoting life to spiritual rather than material quest. Hinduism supports India's caste system, as it is believed that a person is born in a family belonging to a particular caste as a consequence of his spiritual achievements in the previous life.

*Buddhism* today has 250 million followers all over the world and extends to Central and Southeast Asia, China, Korea, and Japan. This religion emphasizes right seeing, thinking, speech, action, living, effort, mindfulness and meditation. In the above Buddhist countries, especially Korea, China and Japan, another religion- *Confucianism* is also widely adhered to. Three values are central to the Confucian system of ethics - reciprocal obligation, loyalty, and honesty in dealing with others. These beliefs can be attributed to the importance of group in these societies, close family and social ties in these cultures. The cost of doing business in countries like Japan is lowered due to labour loyalty, cooperation between different industries to work for the betterment of their groups/nations.

- **Language** : The English language has but one word for snow; the language of the Inuit (Eskimos) lacks a general term for it. Instead, because distinguishing different forms of snow is so important in the lives of the Inuit, they have 24 words that describe different types of snow (e.g. powder snow, falling snow, wet snow, drifting snow). How beautifully the above illustration expresses that culture evolves according to local needs and diversity and becomes an essential ingredient of the recipe of culture.

Language is the deepest and richest expression of a primary social culture.

Language is not simply an expression of thought; it helps give structure to thought. That is why in countries with more than one language one often finds more than one culture. India is a classic example of subcultures within cultures defined on the basis of language. Many states in India have been formed on the basis of the languages spoken in that area viz. Tamil Nadu where Tamil is spoken, Maharashtra where Marathi is spoken. Here the language serves as the source of identity for that particular group. The loss and suppression, therefore, of the language would represent the loss of the very heart and soul of the culture. In many countries the social and economic classes are clearly audible through dialects - such as England.

We all communicate with each other by a host of non-verbal cues. The raising of eyebrows is a sign of recognition in most countries and smiling is the sign of joy. Many non-verbal cues are however culturally bound. In the U.S. the customary distance between the two business parties is five to eight feet. In Latin America this distance is three to five feet. Consequently many North Americans may feel that Latin Americans are "invading their personal space" and can be seen backing away from them during the conversation.

- **Education:** Formal education is the medium through which individuals learn many of the languages, conceptual and mathematical skills that are indispensable in modern society. This is the structured method of passing the knowledge gained by the mankind, through the centuries of evolution and development. Formal education supplements the family's role in socializing the young into the values and norms of the society. Values and norms are taught both directly and

indirectly. The societies where the education levels are high usually correspond to a prosperous culture with high levels of development. Education becomes one of the influencing factor as well as the factor responsible for diversity among various cultures.

- **Economic Philosophy :**The economic ideologies followed by a country also gravely influences the culture and attitudes of that society and country. The pre disintegration U.S.S.R. and other socialist countries lay more emphasis on equitable distribution of resources, ownership of property by states, central planning through which the state and society work together for general upliftment of the people. However, the states believing in the capitalist ideology leave the market forces free to operate on their own. The general aim is profit motive and the idea of welfare of people or responsibility towards state is not given much importance. This may also explain the cultural emphasis on individualism in Western countries like U.S., Sweden, Germany, while the lack of entrepreneurial activities and failures of economies in the socialist regimes.
- **Political Philosophy :** The political philosophy refers to the pattern that is followed to govern the geographical boundaries of the country. This in turn also influences the economic ideologies and the way the society behaves. Democracy is defined as the government of the people, for the people, by the people. In such countries there is respect for individual freedom, there is participation by each and every citizen in the functioning of democracy. Whereas in the communist regimes such as North Korea, China, there is a lot of state intervention, the socialistic pattern of economic framework is used. The Tiananmen Square tragedy in

China; North Korea which is on the verge of collapse, shows how individual rights are given less importance in such political regimes. In countries like Saudi Arabia there is monarchy. Such societies though economically strong, lag behind in the basic intellectual and human development of its subjects.

The above overview of the layers of a society gives some suggestion of the complexity of cultural diversity. When we add distance to the equation by intermixing various primary cultures, the complexity of the problem seems to be mind-boggling. All cultures develop with integrity in their core. An absolute logic prevails over the system of values, beliefs and norms that constitute a culture.

- **Dilemmas** : Transcending from one culture to another can be a revelation in itself. Through this transition we learn more about not only other cultures but also the meaning and true depths of our culture flashes across us.

Let us consider a hypothetical case of a person X migrating from India to U.S. for economic reasons. On his very first step on that land he will be judged by one of his physical attributes- *the skin color*. Yes, he shall confront the problem of racism whereby he shall be treated differently from the rest of the Americans for the physical features over which he has no control. Racism is one form of ethnocentrism wherein white people consider their skin color types as superior to other skin color types.

In his next step, as he moves to join the American society he shall come face to face with various societal values such as - less importance given to the institution of the family, sex - the word taboo in his country is discussed freely there, young children move out of their families as soon as they enter the teen age, live-in

relationships are accepted, single parent families are the letter of the day. Women and men enjoy equal status not only under law but also it is an accepted norm in their society. His first problem shall be as to how far should he accept these values and where should he draw the line? For, he has to adjust and be flexible in his approach towards the acceptance of such cultural norms in order to survive and be accepted in that society.

His confusion shall be further aggravated when he moves out from the realm of the society to the work culture of that nation. The power equation, which worked in India, will find no place in American offices. Time is considered as money there, and the personal life is not mixed with the official life. Professionalism is highly rated there, and neither the organization nor the employees believe in the concept of permanent employment. The performance of an individual is the sole criteria, the moment you are not required in the organization you are retrenched, and the organization shall not feel social responsibility towards the employee. Such work cultures with stiff competition will definitely bring Mr X under tremendous pressure as he comes from the society with a relaxed work culture. While leaving this person to mix and match and reject the various new ideologies that come across his way and challenge his core beliefs, which is necessary for his survival and acceptance in the new society and culture. we move on to one other aspect of cultural diversity.

The subculture consists of the culture within a culture. It elaborates on the concept of cultural specialties i.e. certain people share cultural patterns that are not the part of the larger society. Further expanding this case let us consider some Mr. A as he migrates from a city, say Lucknow, which is known for its unique culture, to a cosmopolitan city like Mumbai. Though both

the cities are part of the large Indian culture but the language, the food habits, the work culture, the attitude of people towards marriage, family life and adultery in Mumbai are starkly different from that of Lucknow. This further elaborates the idea of cultural diversity in which a person entangles himself due to cross-cultural movements.

A counter culture is the set of sub-cultural patterns that are directly in conflict with the values, norms and attitudes of the larger society. We have examples of Naxalite movement, the Khalistan movement and trouble in Kashmir in India, which are directly in conflict with the ideologies of Indian society.

*Why do we face dilemmas as we transcend from one culture to another?*

We struggle to embrace the human dimension of distance : the cultural diversity. This is because we :

- a) *Anticipate similarity* – We enter cross-cultural experiences with a sub-conscious expectation that others will be similar to us. Deep within, we believe that everyone thinks and feels the same way we do.
- b) *Encounter shocks* – A cultural shock occurs when others do not behave as we expected. An intense emotional reaction occurs and no sense can be made immediately of the differences.
- c) *Consider possibilities* – A struggle exists between the desire to understand the new behaviour and our intense, uncomfortable emotional reaction. Interpretations are based on our own cultural knowledge.

Much of the pain comes from the sudden challenge to long held values posed by exposure to new culture. The mind opens new vistas, but old habits, myths and fears - in short culture holds us back.

*Can there be a uniform culture in the world? To what extent is it possible? Will there be ethical dilemmas that are faced in the process of formation of global culture?*

Various trends are making waves in the present world scenario, which shall play a defining role in the present and future of the world. *Globalization* of economic activity is perhaps one of the defining trends of our time. It is the reshaping the grand macro economic level aspects of economic life by cutting across the world barriers in trade, and boundaries that had hampered the interaction, cooperation and growth of countries if the world. But a smoothly running global economy with a super efficient engine of productivity and prosperity is an ideal case because global work spans not only oceans and continents, but even greater divide between cultures, customs, myths and civilizations.

When we talk of free trade flow we fail to realise that the economic disparity prevalent among the developed, developing and the underdeveloped countries of the world, might further aggravate this process. Recently we saw the East Asian crisis, which was the result of integrating these economies with the world economy. The biased nature of international agreements viz. W.T.O., I.M.F., World Bank, through which they favor the developed western countries (survival of the fittest) as against the interests of the developing and the under developed countries are breeding tensions in the world.

Also, considering the micro-level factors in the wake of globalization and liberalization - the global work culture may be affected. The MNC's may try to adapt to a uniform work culture. In Japan, for instance, there has been an increasing trend towards adopting western work culture as a result of which job-hopping, retrenchment of employees, might bring about a confrontation with the cultural

beliefs of loyalty towards the organization, life-time employment. This may lead to major social implications. The adoption of modern technologies in the labour intensive countries like India and China with large-scale poverty levels shall breed social resentment.

In fact, the MNC's wherever they are going, are adopting to the local needs - the McDonalds outlet can be found in various parts of the world but everywhere they have localized their menu and taste to cater to the local needs. "Glocal" is the new mantra today.

Another dimension of the effect of globalization and integration of different working methods can be seen in India where we are simply aping western ideologies in our work culture. In western countries the sole aim of an organization is profit, people in general prefer challenging, dynamic work culture and hence the employees are given the pay package in the form of "*less pay and more incentive*". If the same methodology is applied in India where, though money is important, it is not considered as the sole need for life, challenge is not considered as an important ideal (because of following of Hindu concepts where leading an ascetic life is given more respect to in the society) and hence this philosophy of motivating people may not work here. In fact, such methods may ultimately lead to widespread discontent among the masses.

With the advent of super technologies and communication channels such as satellite communication, internet, on-line conference facilities, etc. the world is actually becoming a small place. A few years from now the happenings in one part of the world shall be instantly known in the other parts. This linking of different parts of world may actually lead to same fashion trends; all type of foods available in different parts of the world; a universal working

language; although these superficial levels of the culture might appear similar all over the world. But, how far can it change the core values of the culture? Can we transcend the geographical factors? A simple *siesta*, which is a necessity in the Mediterranean countries or hot countries like India, might be wasteful practice in cold countries with short days like the Scandinavian countries.

As organizations go global various social phenomenon will add unfamiliar strands of social culture to the already complex patterns created by the segmentation of the work force; i.e. the social fragmentation occurring through global migration. Indeed, the UN population fund warned in its 1993 State of the World report that global migration "could become the human crisis of our age". Noting that "the growth of the global economy has emphasized rather than reduced inequality between nations", the report paints an alarming picture of tens of millions of people streaming across the economic gaps between nations, between cities and rural areas. It estimates that some 2% of world's population, or about 100 million people are now displaced from their own culture and national economy. As they move from dirt farms to urban ghettos, from underdeveloped to developed world with expectations, which even advanced countries, would find difficult to meet. This may develop a cosmopolitan culture or may create rootless people who have nothing (culture, language, nation, etc.) to identify with. The human migration has brought to the forefront many dimensions such as xenophobic, ethnocentric, religious and fanatic tendencies along with the persistence of racism and interest clashes. So long as gross economic disparities exist, this mass movement shall continue. In the process we will come across the names of: *Osama Bin Laden, Aum cult of Japan, clashes in Ireland between Protestants and*

*Catholics, Islamic fundamentalists* and their involvement in disruption activities all over the world. All these names have one common thread - the fear of identity crisis with respect to culture, religion, language, race, etc.

It is a human tendency to consider one's beliefs, race, and religion superior to others. One of the culminations of this attitude is racism, which creates hatred among the group of people based on their skin color. The economic implication of the mass movement of people from across the world to developed countries can be seen in the "re-rising" of Nazism in Germany where the "outsiders" have been blamed for encroaching upon their land and jobs. The *Graham Staines* case in India; the stories of proselytizing of people from Hinduism to Christianity and the rule of Taliban in Afghanistan, the terrorist activities in different parts of the world is due to the belief that one's religion is superior to others. Indian culture which propagated the ideology of "*vasudheiv kutumbakam*" (the whole world is my family) itself has seen the Hindu Muslim riots. The concept of having a unified criminal law alongside of a stratified civil law has questioned the very *raison d'être* of secularism in India exposing its hollowness.

The surge in the Islamic fundamentalism in the past two decades, in part is the response to the social pressures created in traditional Islamic societies by the move toward modernization and by the influence of western ideas, such as liberal democracy, materialism, equal rights for women, and by western attitudes towards sex, marriage, and alcohol. For the impoverished majority in these countries, modernization has too often offered too little in the way of tangible economic progress, while threatening their traditional value system. Thus, for a Muslim who cherishes his traditions and feels that his identity is jeopardized by the encroachment of alien

western values, Islamic fundamentalism has become a cultural anchor.

Fundamentalists demand a rigid commitment to traditional religious beliefs and rituals. Women in these countries are again wearing floor length, long sleeved dresses and covering their hair; religious studies have increased in Universities; the publication of religious texts has increased; and more religious orations are heard in public. In several Muslim countries fundamentalists have gained political power and have used this to try to make Islamic law (as set down in the Koran) the law of the land. These fundamentalists have been most successful in Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the most recent and burning addition to this list is the Taliban. It is somewhat strange that in Afghanistan, Taliban fought with the help of two staunch US allies. Its terrorist machine which was financed by Saudi Arabian money and whose foot soldiers came from Pakistan. The question we face today is how ethical is it to rule the land under the rules of the religion while, suppressing public grievances and spreading terrorism in world in this process. It poses a question - where should a limit be set so that one culture does not overpower the other?

What does all this signify? It shows that the more we move towards the possibility of a uniform world culture, the more we are dragged backwards due to the further fragmentation of societies, cultures and nations into smaller units. Partly, the reason for the above may be the rapid pace at which this change is occurring. Culture evolves gradually by accepting and rejecting the ideas that come across it. The society cannot adjust to these rapid changes and the result is these social tensions.

So now we can confront and answer the above raised questions – diversity is the basic human nature. When each and every

individual in the world is different from the other, how can we expect the entire human race to follow same culture? The answer is but obvious. We have to live with diversity. Cultural diversity is the spice of the world that will continue to make the world an interesting to place to live in.

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