CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION AND THE BAULS OF BENGAL

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ABSTRACT
Globalization is a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses not only economic but also political, ideological, cultural and other related issues. The interaction between culture and globalization is a matter of contention in the literature and various theoretical approaches have been developed to examine their correlation. Over time cultures get influenced and undergo changes through contact with other cultures. But the process does not always lead to cultural standardization or convergence towards some specific culture. This article provides a short description of the concept of cultural globalization and reviews the primary theoretical approaches related to globalization. It also examines how globalization affects local cultures in the form of external factors. The increasing popularity of the Bauls throughout the world has proved the fact that in the process of cultural globalization the superficial elements of a culture are mixed, but the deeply rooted inherent aspects remain unaffected throughout the process.
KEYWORDS: *Baul, Globalization, Culture, Hybridization.*

I.INTRODUCTION

Globalization is the prominent determining factor of most of the economic, political and cultural developments of the present world. It is quite commonly used in business and economics implying the opening of local and nati onalistic perspectives to a broader interdependent world with free movement of capital goods and services. It has helped the integration of nations of the world with more modern means of transport and economic relations and formation of the global market through multinational corporations. But the term would be matured enough if we apply it to ever more particular aspect of human life. (Robertson, 1991) argued that "Globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole: both concrete global interdependence and consciousness of the global whole." It has facilitated the expansion of international transactions in cultural matters, such as movies, music, and publications etc. The increasing trade in cultural products is widening the exposure of all local cultures to foreign cultures and the inevitable consequence of this exposure brings about changes in local cultures, values, and traditions. The term 'Globalization of Culture' was introduced in the late 80's to indicate the situation of convergence of nations and the spread of cultural relations of the people. According to (Giddens, 1990), "the globalization can be defined as the intensification of social relations throughout the world, linking distant localities in such a way that local happenings are formed as a result of events that occur many miles away and vice versa." It refers to the idea that there is now a global common mono- culture transmitted through internet, international tourism etc.

Cultural globalization incorporates the transmission of cultural products across national boundaries and consists of all art form. Changes in musical culture are one of the important aspects of globalization and these changes are complicated and multileveled as they concern institutions, systems of values and social groups involved in musical life. Although many critics believe that exposure of local

EPRA International Journal of Research and Development (IJRD)

culture to international frontier can undermine their own cultural identity, there is no consensus on this matter. Contrary to their views, others see globalization as an essentially equalizing force. (Rothkpof, 1997) argued that globalization promotes integration and removes not only cultural barriers but also many of the negative dimensions of culture.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Globalization is a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses not only economic but also political, ideological, cultural and other related issues (Prasad, 2006). According to (Jaya, 2010) globalization is a natural and inevitable process and no country of the world can ignore or avoid it and failing to embrace it will lead to marginalization. It constitutes a policy or a system that stimulate global interaction, independence and interconnection among different nations through advanced technologies. The concept of culture has two main viewpoints (Hassi and storti, 2012). In one sense, culture is an integrated set of values, norms and behaviours acquired by human being's as member of a society. In other sense, from sociological perspective it refers to artistic and symbolic creations, heritage and cultural products. (Cowen, 2002) argued that culture refers to some creative products and activities that stimulate and entertain individuals such as music, literature, visual arts and cinema. Researchers have summarized cultural globalization into three main heads: cultural homogenization, cultural heterogenization and cultural glocalization.

However some others views cultural globalization from a more focused perspectives. Yu (2008) stated that cultural globalization is not only a process of homogenization of national culture but the inseparable interconnection among different national cultures as well as the increasing consensus about and consciousness of global issues. (Li, 2002) also hold similar view. Both of them believed that cultural globalization is a process rather than a condition. Contradicting the old left's dubious view about the potential of globalization, (Giddens A. , 2000) argued that globalization does not necessarily imply homogenization of the world controlled by free marketers; rather, it opens an increasing opportunity "for the revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world …[creating] new economic and cultural zones within and across nations". Similarly (Tomlinson, 1999) observes a possibility of "self-realization in lifestyles which are themselves open to an expanded mutuality". The present study is in conformity with the view that cultural globalization not

only imply uniformity of national values and beliefs but involves a rather permanent connections among different cultures and in the process of cultural globalization a mutual concern can be achieved through helpful interaction among different cultures.

III. OBJECTIVES

With such a background, the objective of the present study is to analyse cultural globalization with reference to the Bauls of Bengal and the emergence of a shared cross-cultural pattern among modern Baul artists.

IV. INTERACTION BETWEEN CULTURE AND GLOBALIZATION

Interaction between culture and globalization is not a recent phenomenon. With the introduction of urban metropolitan cities and the beginning of commercial activities, dating back to more than 5000 years ago, cultural exchanges have taken place among different societies. But these interactions were limited by the means of communication and transportation. With the industrial revolution, cultural products began to export across borders. From the 19th century cultural industries began to dependent on technical innovations, such as printing in 1860 and electricity and cinema in 1890. In the 20th century cultural transactions are dominated by communication technology and ensure seaming less flow across borders. Interrelationship of culture and globalization has been discussed from various theoretical standpoints. (Hassi & Storti, 2012) grouped them under the three H scenarios: Heterogenization, Homogenization and Hybridization. In the Heterogenization process local culture goes through continuous transformation and reinvention due to global factors. Throughout this process local cultures do not remain unaffected by the global factors, but the main crux of the culture remains unaffected and intact, with only surface change. So Heterogenization refers to the barriers that would prevent to making cultures look alike in such a way that foreign cultural practices remain along with local and national cultures resulting in a side-by-side coexistence of the two cultures (Prasad and Prasad, 2006). But in the homogenization process the forces that prevent to making cultures look alike are weak and with global flows are strong (Ritzer, 2010). According to this view, local culture can be shaped by more powerful global culture to create a new and identifiable class of individual. In this process globalization contributes in the destruction of local culture by eliminating the uniqueness of local culture to establish a homogenized world culture. But (Pieterse,

2004) argued that the idea of cultural homogenization is rather too weak as several local cultures have showed their potential to save their core culture from foreign influences. In between these two opposing view, hybridization process emphasized that globalization is a blend of homogenization and heterogenization that includes both differentiation and interconnection (Robertson R. , 2001). According to this view 'Global culture" is a hybrid culture which is neither local nor global at their core. In fact, globalization should not be considered as monolithic network spreading process, rather as a collection of partially overlapping socio-techno-cultural landscapes (Appadurai, 1990). In this sense hybridization is open-ended from theoretical perspective based on practical experience. This view asserts that interaction between globalization and localization is so complex and overlapping that they cannot be understood from the narrow perspective of a centre-periphery-dichotomy (Kumaravadivelu, 2008).

V. IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON LOCAL CULTURE

Globalization is not only a process of increasing the availability of foreign made consumer goods, but also increasing international trade in cultural products such as movies, music and publication. The exposure of national culture to foreign culture often brings change in local culture. It has the potential to enrich the world culturally. The opportunities for cultural exchange brought about can help to promote tolerance and diversity to form a multi-culture "global village" where ideas and practices can be freely exchanged and appreciated. The effects of globalization on cultural diversity are a debatable issue. On one hand it has the potential to mobilize and empower people, provide a means for self-representation and support a collective identity through socialization. On the other has it has the ability to disempower people by misrepresentation, and propel the loss of individualism and group identity. (Jameson, 1998) summaries these two opposing views as : one of a corporate-dominated monoculture where nations and cultural groups alike are deprived of autonomy and identity; and another of a vibrant celebration of pluralism, in which various cultural groups are in direct and harmonious contact with one another, free from limiting political forces.

Globalization can also facilitate to reinforce local culture. For example, in India, satellite TV permits the broadcasting of a number of regional channels which telecast Indian context. This brings an opportunity to Indian individual to identify with his regional ties. Again global companies need to take into account the cultures of foreign countries in order to expand their operations in different countries. This also enhances cultural awareness. Globalization can also leads to cultural conflict. (Barber, 1992) argued that sometimes violent reaction against the West may be seen by some rebellious group in order to reaffirm their traditional values. They are afraid of change of their traditional culture and want to preserve it.

Globalization can be empowering to various local cultures because it allows self-representation and information sharing on a global level. It allows cultures to have a distinct voice to promote awareness and commentaries on different aspects that are important in preserving the culture and allowing them to retain their diversity. When cultures have control over their public images there is little fear of misrepresentation. Technology and mass media has a major role in revitalizing and restoration of cultural preservation of nations. It preserves the collective identity by giving autonomy and empowerment (Ginsburg, 2002). Therefore, while globalization removes spatiotemporal restrictions on cultural goods and services, it also promotes national desires, identities, dreams and aspirations in the global marketplace.

In spite of having many positive effects, cultural globalization has had some negative impacts on cultural diversity. Multinational corporations can promote consumer culture influencing societal values. There is also the fear of loss of individualism and group identity. Globalization promotes further colonization that impacts intellectual property and cultural rights.

VI. BAULS OF BENGAL

There has been much disagreement over the meaning and origin of the term 'Baul' (Hindi variant 'Baur'). It may have been derived from Sanskrit word '*Vatula*' (affected by wind-disease i.e, crazy) or from '*vyakula*' (impatiently eager). Other opinions states that it derives from the Arabic word '*awliya*' (plural of 'wali' meaning 'near' or 'devotee') or from sahajiya Buddhist word '*bajrakul*' subsequently became 'bajul' and then 'baul' (Mondal, 2015). All these terms are consistent with the apparent life style of the Bauls which refers to a group of inspired mystics with an eagerness for spiritual life that is free from religious shackles (Dasgupta, 1994). The Bauls belong to the socio-economically and politico-religiously marginalized section of West Bengal, north-eastern India and in Bangladesh. The baul philosophy was influenced by three religious customs: *Sahajiya* (Buddhism), *Bhakti* (Hindu *Vaishnavism*) and *Sufi* (Islamic). They are primarily minstrels, comprised partly of householders

and mainly of wandering mendicants. Many of them live in *akhra* (place of sharing their view, songs and philosophy with others) and are dependent on *madhukari* (subsistence earinng refusing any surplus) with a small number having alternative professions. From historical perspective, exclusion politics of *Brahmins* (upper caste Hindu) and Muslims and colonial oppression created social and economic uncertainty among the lower rung of the society, which paved the way for the emergence of many 'deviant sects' like *Baul, Fakir, sain* etc. (Urban, 2001). Subsequently, these sects questioned and challenged the religious dominance of the so called social rulers through their esoteric, overturn and critial discourses, expressed through codes in their songs.

       Though bauls have been originated from different religious sects but they strongly deny the external religious practices and strongly criticize the caste system, injustice and socio-economic inequality (Sengupta, 2015). Through their song they try to unshackle the intolerances and inequalities by fulfilling a dream of an alternative, less-exploitative, more egalitarian spiritual and social order (Urban, 2001). Sometimes they rely on their evocative and esoteric songs in order to express and to seek some kind of deeper spiritual solution to these economic ills. Baul songs are spiritual and philosophical in nature and are divided into different *tattwa* (theory of epistemology) such as '*prema-tattwa*' (spiritual love), '*guru-tattwa*', (spiritual teacher), '*deha-tattwa*' (body), '*param-tattwa*' (supreme or almighty), '*srishti-tattwa*' (creation), '*manasiksha*' (self-realization), '*gujhyo-tattwa*' (esoteric) (Sengupta, 2015). Sometimes socio-economic issues like poverty, inequality and injustice occupies a place as theme in their songs. The Baul songs have passed from one generation to another orally without records. But presently, many Bauls records their song in electronic media.

       The partition of Bengal in 1905 by British government created a massive tension in the co-existence of Hindu and Muslims. Some sensitive Bengalis like Mohammad Mansur Uddin tried to re establish the co-existence between the two communities in the past for continued co-operation in future. He published a book entitled *Haramoni* or *Lost Gems* which was basically a collection of Baul songs. The intrinsic philosophy of Baul is so strong that great poet Rabindranath Tagore was deeply impressed by this folk music that are reflected in his many poetry and songs. Some of his songs are centered on 'Moner Manush' indicating a constant dialogue that take place between man/woman and the Almighty. Kshitimohan

Sen, a friend and cooeague of Tagore, in his book *Hindu-Muslim co-operation in India* praised Bauls as paragons of communal co-operation (Capwell, 1988). Recognizing the rich cultural heritage UNESCO has designated the works of Baul as "Masterpieces of oral and intangible heritage of humanity" in 2005.

Baul music is carried out by some musical instruments like the Ektara, the Dotara, the Dhol, Manjiras etc. These instruments are made from some simple natural materials like, clay, bamboo, wood etc. which generate sweet melodious tunes. The chanting sound cannot be matched by modern musical instruments. There are audiences who still appreciate the baul song in its original form and acknowledge the deeper meaning of the song. But today many musicians introduced modern touches into the traditional form to attract audiences. Traditional Bauls believed that it would be a destruction of tradition to modify the words and the intrinsic meaning of the song, except changing the rhythm to attract the modern audiences. The resurgence of many such events has proved that the baul music tradition has preserved and spreaded globally with the help of advanced electronic media. In fact only the superficial elements of a culture are mixed, but the deeply rooted inherent aspects remain unaffected throughout the process. It is only the peripheral elements of the culture that crosses nation boundaries through cuisine, shopping habits, arts and entertainment. Nevertheless deep core elements remain adjacent to the native culture (Hassi & Storti (2012).

VII. BAULS IN THE GLOBALIZED ERA

Under cultural globalization, the exposure of local artists to new systems of socio-cultural system is inevitable. It may bring about many undesirable consequences. The apathetic attitude of the urban India towards folk cultures is likely to pervade to the rural areas as the latter is exposed to the infiltration of electronic media. Lack of interest among younger generation to acquire the skills of rural folk culture is a dismal sign. The electronic media is detaching rural audiences from the auspices of traditional forms with the 'marginalization' of rural artists by the dominance of metropolitan cultural forms under the liberal regime in post modernized India (Soja, 2000). In this sense globalization is actually restricting the area of an individual artist's own creativity. Presently, local artists are striving against a powerful technology driven modern culture while struggling for its own cultural survival. (Gramsci, 1971) noted that "the history of subaltern groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic. There undoubtedly does exist a tendency to

(at least provisional stage of) unification of historical activities of these groups, but this tendency is continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups; …Subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up…..”

Globalization may also be an opportunity for the rural artists to absorb new themes and formulate new cultural strategies to attract greater audience. With the advancement of communication technology, the Bauls and their songs has come into the reach of urban audience of India and abroad. By virtue of their message, rhythm and mode of representation, they have created a discernible attraction throughout the world. They have added special attractive features in their mode of presentation along with the inclusion of modern musical instruments to get attraction from all classes of audience. They are now invited to stage their performance in different western countries (Mondal, 2015). All these incidents have certainly brought about changes in the Baul community that goes both in favour and against them. Bauls, who once lived in *Ashramas* and *Akhdras*, now started settling down in the urban areas with their families. Some of them are now more interested in recording their songs in electronic media. This individualistic attempt for the upliftment of their materialistic status compels them to embrace a different lifestyle different from their *sadhana*. Their attachment with the globalized world has expanded their activities as well as greater interaction with the *non-bauls*.

In-spite-of all these abominable consequences, there are still some cultural traits of their own that maintain their social and cultural identity in the secular society. The Baul singers still maintain their tradition, dressed in saffron gowns and plunking one-stringed instrument *ektara,* singing in trains, at village roads and marketplaces. Following the practice of *madhukari* they make regular contact with their followers in local communities and accept any offerings as per the ability and choice of their admirers. This helps them to reduce their ego and ensures the sustanability of their spiritual journey. Their reliance and confidence on local patronage help them to retain their discourses, values and ideology out of the reach of mainstream religious and socio-political institutions (Dutta, 2019). They are very much conscious about preserving their mystical identity and maintain a balance between sexo-yogic representation and introduction of modern elements in their songs. They are keen to identify themselves as 'Real Baul' even in the midst of change in the competitive environment. They have shown greater competence in handling modern musical instruments by adopting new melodies, tunes in spite of embracing the traditional format. Overall, they have adopted a hybridization attitude to meet the changing scenario of a globalized world along with maintaining their own cultural identities.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The interaction between culture and globalization is a matter of contention in the literature and various theoretical approaches have been developed to examine their correlation. Over time cultures get influenced and undergo changes through contact with other cultures. But the process does not always lead to cultural standardization or convergence towards some specific culture such as American and European one. There are ample empirical evidences which show that globalization preserves national cultural diversity in the cultural integration process. In order to get benefit from world culture, local culture should not shut them off from the rest of the world, rather should open up to improve their own capabilities. In the era of globalization, we have access to an immense source of information which influences our socialization through acquired knowledge. These earned qualities are not always destructive to the core components of the native culture. Societies should adapt these practices according to the specification of their local culture. Several academicians and Baul performers believe that on the basis on their intrinsic philosophy and paths they can provide hope for the increasingly insane and turbulent world. By talking the global issues from their local spaces, they open up new avenues for local global exchanges. Breaking the boundaries of caste, class and religion, the Bauls are trying to establish a humane society devoid of exclusion, oppression and material-scarcities. Despite bitter memories of partition and a succession of communal riots in both east and west Bengal, the reputation and popularity of the Baul singers still cuts across borders and religious differences.

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