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The Impact of the Western Culture on Eastern Culture (from an Indian Context): A Comparative Study

Md Nasir Hossain

Research Scholar,
Department of English,
Maulana Azad National Urdu University.

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Abstract:

This paper presents the relationship between the Eastern and Western cultures and their influence. The relationship between the Eastern and Western cultures is profound and interrelated with each other in several ways. Language is one of the critical aspects of the relationship between two cultures; for instance, the English language is spoken worldwide irrespective of boundaries because of its aristocratic position. This paper highlights Western and Eastern cultures through several aspects, such as popular, third-world, and mixed cultures. Generally, culture divides into two cultures: popular and mass culture. However, the researcher looks at the role of different Western cultural aspects on Eastern cultural people and presents some specific elements of culture in this study.

Keywords: Culture, Eastern, Western, Lifestyle, Impact of Culture.

Introduction:

Culture is the lifestyle and way of living with their own identity by using different dresses, specific systems, languages, manners, behaviours, attitudes, certain norms, religions, social thought, etc., in the way of natural, social, historical, economic form or policy, politics. Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines culture as "the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group". All cultures have some values and the individualistic existence of people under the consideration of a particular geographical location. The word 'culture' originated from 'cultura' and 'colere'. Bidney opines, "Culture is a product of agro-facts, (cultivation), artifacts (industries), social facts and mental facts (art, religion,

language.).” Similarly, Johnson opines (as cited in Saad, p.144, 2020) that culture has two aspects, i.e. ‘Explicit’ and ‘Implicit’. The explicit aspect of culture includes those essences which are fully conscious, e.g. language. In contrast, the implicit aspects of culture consider the elements which cannot be described precisely. The discipline of the culture is known as cultural studies. The stream or the discipline of cultural studies came into existence around the 1970s from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies by Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams. Nayar (2017) defines cultural studies as “it is interested in the process by which power relations between and within groups of human beings organizes cultural artefacts (such as food, habits, music, cinema, sports, events, and celebrity culture) and their meanings.” (p.4) The production and consumption are critical aspects of culture. It includes class, economy, and representation, which means how the product is presented to the market or the audience.

There could be several crucial questions that need to be answered. What is the meaning of ‘Western’ culture? ‘Western’ is an umbrella term generally referring to European and North American countries. The behaviour, attitudes, customs, norms, beliefs, values and systems of Western countries people can be considered as Western culture. The other question is why people follow Western culture. The people follow the Western culture due to their rich historical civilization in terms of lifestyle, art, history, literature, heritage and so on. Another important reason could be that politically and economically, Western people are more powerful and have control over third-world countries. Amir Rosenmann (2017) said that “contemporary global culture is widely understood as an extension of the dominant American strand of Western culture.” (Amett, 2002; Moghaddam, 2006; Yang et al., 2011). Moreover, a sense of global identity, of being a part of the global community of humankind, was shown to be a unique and positive predictor of involvement with human rights and social issues on the global level. (Hackett et al., 2015; Reese et al., 2014; Rosenmann, p.352, 2017)

The culture that belongs to Eastern countries is known as Eastern culture. All Asian countries are probably considered to be Eastern (according to the country's geographical location), and their culture is known as Eastern culture. There is a considerable difference between Eastern and Western countries' cultures because of the different locations and social and economic position of the people. The differences are in terms of dresses, language, norms and

system. With time, Eastern people have followed Western civilization and their culture for further progress and better social status. Here, Indian culture is specified as the Eastern culture in this paper. People use Western culture as a branded product, and whatever they do or will do, Eastern culture people keep following according to their choices and desires. It does not matter where the cultural item belongs; both are very important parts of people's lives, whether Western or Eastern. Tripathy (2017) rightly mentioned the Eastern culture:

The non-Western world culture, which is seen as an impediment to the growth of modernism, is not a space of homogeneity and uniformity. It may come as a surprise that creation does not often function on pre-existing cultures; such forms of cultural character are also developed. Therefore, it could be impractical to use culture only as an instrument to accomplish a development mission since cultures have too many (even in an apparently homogeneous region) to provide a consistent development target roadmap. Cultures can be a conflicting enterprise, although it could imagine as total wholes and containers of people's ideals, often leading to simple appropriation and co-option. (2017 p.160)

The influence of culture is one of the important things in society. Then there would be a question: How is the cultural influence? Following any aspects or elements of the cultures and adopting the social position and improving the status in the economy, politics and social life. It changes people's lifestyles by their choice or desire to track certain things and build new social positions. People adopt certain cultural aspects because of their trends, classiness, taste, opportunity, inspiration, motivation and newness of style by choosing the food, dress, language, behaviour, norms and other elements. The people's tastes changed with time due to their desires. Then there would be another question: How has culture changed or been adopted? Tripathy (2017) rightly mentioned the development of culture:

Culture is not viewed as uniform or aligned against Western/state-sponsored ideals by this definition of culture as disagreement over context, but rather a space where various concepts compete for expression. Thus, the mainstream perception of local culture as

indigenous, eternal, capital-resistant is problematic; the same is true of the straightforward binary of local culture versus global growth. (2017, p.160)

Culture is made not only from the outside but from the inside of the particular country, which means that Western and Eastern cultures are interrelated. Adopting the culture is another important aspect of forming the culture in some areas. Then there would be a question: How is it adopted or processed? Culture is adopted through various processes, like Western culture in India, which is adopted through colonization and modern technological invention. The British ruled India for over 200 years, and at this point of time, they not only tried to spread their colony and propagate the Christian religion, but they also left some cultural aspects like Western dress, the English language, foods, etc. However, through adoption, inclination, and colonization, British culture spread worldwide, especially in India. Nowadays, social applications are also responsible for sharing the culture beyond the boundaries. Therefore, in the analysis section, the researcher highlights how the Western cultural aspects present and influence Eastern culture with time.

Analysis:

There are many cultural elements in society. The cultural elements are changed according to the change of place and time. The essential elements are food, dress, events, social behaviours, economic system and social position. There are also many other cultural elements such as dances, songs, performances or drama, social events, etc. This paper highlights the relationship between the Eastern and Western cultures and Western cultural influence on Eastern people. Both cultures are interrelated with each other in various aspects. For instance, language is one of the important aspects of the relationship between two cultures; the English language is spoken worldwide irrespective of boundaries because of its aristocratic social position and social status. Even though it is considered that English-speaking people are intellectual and considered knowledge in the field. The fact is that it is just a language, and it does not mean people should know more but sharing information only. However, the English language has a predominant attitude over other languages. There are many elements as well, like food, dresses, dance, lifestyle, luxury watches, beauty cream, electronics devices, martial arts, business models (shopping mall, which comes under mall culture), performances (music show, talent show,

international dance show, fashion show, television show and comedy show). The researcher highlights some crucial elements in detail based on the theme position and importance of each element and also tries to understand how these following cultural aspects help to form certain relations between the Eastern and Western cultures. The impact of Western culture on Eastern culture is remarkable. The researcher would examine some elements in detail.

Dress is one of the important elements of the culture. We can distinguish the cultural boundary through attire and identify where the person belongs. India comes under Eastern cultures; there is a certain dress code in traditionally individualistic gender. Women wear 'salwar-kameez', 'saree', 'kurti', and men wear 'trouser', 'kurta', 'pyjama', 'dhoti', and 'pugree' (turban), which changes according to geographical boundaries within the country. Along with all these things, both genders are moving to modernization, which can be considered trendy and wear 'jeans', 't-shirts', 'short jeans', 'short pants', 'trendy shoes' or 'kitto' and use different hairstyles irrespective of gender. Though it cannot be generalised for all, most young people follow certain patterns. According to the changing of the festival or occasion, the dress code also changes when someone goes to a marriage ceremony; he/she has different attire, like women wearing a 'saree' or some fancy dress. In contrast, a man wears a 'kurta', 'blazer-jacket', or 'sherwani'. However, at other festivals, people generally follow the Western dress code, like wearing jeans, short pants or trousers, sleeping light dresses, etc. Here the question is, why such a difference when the person is the same? Though the person is the same due to a change of occasion, the dress code has been changed. This is nothing but following the Western dress code and their lifestyle. It also proves how the Western dress code predominantly reflects the Indian young generation's mindset and other lifestyle events.

Food is another important aspect of culture. Through food, the researcher highlights how Western food is being projected as a branding product rather than an Indian one. We have many traditional Indian foods such as rice, fish, roti, biryani, and chicken. But now we eat Western food rather than Indian food. Nowadays, we prefer burgers, KFC chicken, Italian pizza, Chinese Chaumin, Swiss chocolates, Pepsi, Coca-Cola, and so on, which belong to different Western countries and not from India. Although all these are costly, people are still following and eating/drinking the above foods. The question is raised: why is it so? The reasons are pretty evident because of the presentation and branding of products and the food as being crispy and

tasty by the respective companies. The product is the same, but the representation is different. Thus, all these foods have some kind of marketing strategy which attracts a big audience.

Household elements are another important aspect of culture. For furnishing houses, people use different paints and furniture. Still, nowadays, due to Western style, we follow the Western furnishing of household things like electric side light tables, sofas, colourful lights, mirroring tables, tiles (on the floor, walls, chicken room, and washroom with different unique designs), different interior and exterior. This is just another impact of the Western kind of luxurious lifestyle. Instead of using Eastern items to furnish our homes, we follow Western elements, but we can even say that this results from progress and improvement of people's lifestyles.

Luxurious products are another important concern of Western culture on Eastern culture, through the use of watches, glass, beauty cream, face wash, etc. People nowadays use branded products rather than local ones. Why are people doing so? The reason is their social status, aristocratic mindset, and identity value. Though the work function is the same, the presentation is different, which helps them easily attract the audience. The use of brand watches is another important thing, for instance: 'Moscot', 'Versace', 'Celine', 'Ray-ban', 'Karen Walker', 'Michael Kors', etc. Another important luxury products being sold in India rapidly are 'beauty creams' and 'face wash'. The reason is because of the concept of 'fairness'. People use many new 'fairness beauty' creams to keep themselves fair, clean and clear (like Western people), for instance: 'Fair& Lovely', 'Nivea', 'Johnson Powder', 'Park Avenue', 'Boroplus', 'Ponds' and so on products which are very famous in everyday lifestyle in India. The concept of 'fairness' is very effectively used in this context. The people are comparing themselves to be whiter in comparison to others. The Western people are white, and the people of Eastern follow the Western attitude of 'whiteness' in their lifestyle to become superior in comparison to blacks. However, what I think as a researcher is that 'white' is nothing but a myth for the Eastern people because whatever 'you are' now, that is your 'identity', and everyone should respect their identity without judging them. Besides, people have their own choices; whatever they have and whatever they do completely depends upon them.

Performance is another important event for presenting Eastern culture. Some obvious performances can be presented in Eastern culture, for instance, marriage ceremonies, dance performances, singing performances, talent shows and mall culture. Although India has many dance forms like 'Kuchipudi', 'Kathak', 'Odissi', 'Manipuri', 'Kathakali', people are still following Western dances, such as 'pop-up', 'hip-hop', 'break dance', 'ballet', 'salsa', 'moon-walk' and 'sun-walk' and many more. Many Eastern singing and talent reality shows started after taking inspiration from Western culture, like 'The Voice', a singing reality show and India's Got Talent. Mall culture is a significant factor in attracting the audience quickly by using different glass, mirrors and representations of the products. Even the people follow the 'Kung fu' and Michael Jackson's 'moonwalk' dancing styles. Many elements inspired and were followed by Eastern ideas of the culture of Western culture. Thus, culture is an inclusive term and is represented differently according to their understanding.

Many elements spread in the name of culture and are important in our lives. They are not an inseparable part of human life. People adopt certain cultural things with the changing of time and become habitual. Cultural adoption is a process which occurs through the conscious or subconscious mind. There are many Western cultural elements, especially from European countries, people adopt in their lives. Even Western people follow certain Indian food and Bollywood music traditions, sometimes Indian marriage traditions, and many cultural norms. However, it can be said that both Eastern and Western people are interdependent with each other, either directly or indirectly. Indian culture is considered one of the most versatile mixed cultures in the world. The people of India can preserve this culture by giving more focus and using the slogan 'vocal for local', introduced by Narendra Modi, PM of India. Another thing that can be done to save and preserve our culture is that 'my culture is my identity', discussed below.

'My culture, my identity'

Identity is one of the essential ideas of the individual existence of human beings. Identity makes people different from other people. What is 'cultural identity'? Cultural identity is people's attire, behaviour, attitude and social norms. We can raise one slogan like 'vocal for local' that 'My culture is my identity' means whatever we have or belong to traditionally is our

inevitable part. We should follow that, but we should not be strict in certain norms as well. Indian culture is one of the important aspects that reflect its own identity and beauty. Indian culture is considered one of the best dynamic classic cultures in the world. One of the important proverbs famous for Indian cultural beauty is 'Atithidevo Bhava', which can be translated as: 'You become the one who considers that Guests are equivalent to God.' So, the level of the attitude is relatively higher than in any other country. The representation of Indian culture is another important aspect that is spread all over the world. Some of the famous cultural elements are Indian local dances (like *Kuchipudi*, *Kathak*, *Kuchipudi*, *Manipuri*, *Kathakali*), Bollywood classical music, Madhur sangeet, baul songs or folk songs, local food (Rasgulla sweet, Pau Bhaji, Street food, Badapa, Idli, Dhosa and many more) and traditional dresses (like dhoti and kurta, sherwani, shalwar-kameez, lungi). Many cultural aspects have some social value and identity in society. People follow their own culture as well as Western culture. Sometimes, they wear Western short dresses like bikinis and half-short pants, while boys wear half t-shirts and short pants. This is the influence of Western culture on Eastern culture and its people. But if people wish, they can preserve their own culture and spread it all over the world and will be able to save the local culture.

After all, the Eastern people follow the Western culture in many ways. The people are influenced by the Western ideas of dress, food (burger, kfc, noodles, pizza, swiss chocolate), several white beauty products (Fair and Lovely, Nivea and face wash), watches (Rolex, Fastrack & Titan), dances (moonwalk, pop up, hip-hop), lifestyle, behaviour, attitude, classroom, school culture, cloths, household items and many other elements. Now, people are moving according to choice and desire due to trends of certain things, whether Eastern or Western.

Classification of Culture:

In this section, this paper highlights where the Western and Eastern cultures belong. There are three types of culture: popular, third-world, and mixed culture. Generally, cultural studies are interrelated and divided into two cultures: popular culture and mass culture. Popular culture is the culture of the masses, which includes comic books, popular music (as opposed to classical music), graffiti, mass cinema (as opposed to art cinema), the open spaces of the city (as opposed to the art galleries), sports, and the management system of a particular place. Nayar

(2017) rightly pointed out that “popular culture is the set of practice, artefacts, and beliefs shared by the masses, and is constituted by the everyday life of the masses: the food, habit, fashion, forms of transport, the music, the reading habit, the space they occupy and traverse.” (2017 p.6) On the other hand, Famous Sociologist W.F. Ogburn divides culture into two types such as material and non-material culture, based on the components. Material culture includes the objects of human action that are concrete, visible and measurable. These items are created by man and called 'artefacts.' It applies to books, desks, beds, fixtures, equipment and phones. These material cultures are both external and utilitarian. Material culture has been invented for human convenience. They contribute to the advancement of society. The non-material culture consists of subjective and abstract things such as traditions, ideals, customs of goodwill, beliefs and vocabulary. Non-material culture is an internal phenomenon because it has no material existence. Non-material society is evolving very slowly. It is formed on man's psychological foundations and represents man's inner essence. Non-material culture has two aspects: cognitive and normative. The cognitive aspect deals with knowledge, while the normative aspects consist of norms, rules and values we cannot see or touch upon. Further, according to stability, society is split into two cultures: 'Stable' and 'Unstable'. 'Stable culture' is the cultural patterns that please the group, whereas 'unstable culture' is the culture practised by many people who are unhappy with how things are done.

The concept of modern culture is interesting in terms of its development and nature. Modern culture is spread rapidly from one country to another in society. It has many significant values in terms of its position. Culture is spread everywhere through the internet, where globalization plays an important role in uplifting each and everything whatever things exists in society. The terms modern culture and global culture are both interrelated with each other.

After classifying the culture, it is observed that this paper considers material cultural elements, such as food, dress, and luxury items and non-material things, such as beliefs, values, norms, attitudes, etc. These aspects can be changeable with time. On the other hand, popular culture is also part of it. So, this paper presented the complexity of the Eastern and Western cultural items with the comparison method.

Conclusion:

All the people have some kind of emotional connection with the culture. In our everyday lifestyle, culture plays a significant role in representing particular places featuring social, political, economic and natural connections with the people. The relationship between the Eastern and Western cultures in the Indian context marks a significant output on the influence of the cultures on each other. It is pointed out in the analysis section that Western culture significantly impacts Eastern culture. Most importantly, culture is the identity of its own people. It also shows the rich heritage of India's history, like the Tajmahal monument, which attracts tourists worldwide.

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