

GLOBALISATION AND ITS IMPACT ON SRI LANKAN CULTURE: POPULAR VALUES AND PREDICTIONS*

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Introduction

According to the 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis, in the post-Cold War world, the most important distinctions among people are not ideological, political or economic: they are cultural. And culture is both a divisive and a unifying force. People use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity. In this context, as Huntington argues, local politics is the politics of ethnicity; global politics is the politics of civilizations. A civilization in this framework is the broadest cultural entity; and civilizations have no clear-cut boundaries and no precise beginnings and endings.¹

On the other hand, ethnologists argue that culture and structure of a complex society, especially when they are politicised, is what is meant by a 'nation'. In their analyses, the English term 'culture' is generally used in two senses. First, there is what is known as the *belles lettres* sense of the term, which distinguishes between 'high' and 'low' cultures, and second, there is 'culture' in the sense of the popular customs, mores and world view of a particular community of people. The interesting feature about this latter sense is that 'cultures' are usually classified along geo-political, continental and nationalistic lines. Further in this direction, in the evolution of nation-states through history, they observe two fundamental tendencies, especially in modern political development; cultural differentiation and political rationalization. They are the dialectical motions of national development. Accordingly, culture is not only a system of values and ideas that influence behaviour patterns but also a social barometer that mirrors social consensus on fundamental issues faced by a given society.²

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It is in this context that we examine the post-Cold War globalisation process and the resultant arguments on a 'universal civilization' and a 'global culture'. The aim of the present paper is to examine the cultural impact of globalisation in the Sri Lankan context. It is analysed under four sub-headings:

- (i) Conceptual Framework and Identification of the Problem
- (ii) Aspects of 'Cultural Relativism' or 'Cultural Isolationism' and Sri Lankan Experience
- (iii) Strategies and Processes of 'Dissemination' and 'Diffusion' and
- (iv) Globalisation and National Cultural Identity in the Global Context.

With a focus on the ethnic and ideological dimensions of the theme, the scope of analysis is basically limited to the following two aspects:

- (a) Impact of globalisation upon 'popular culture' in the local scene and
- (b) Global aspects, Sri Lankan orientations and predictions.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

Definition

The process of 'globalisation' can be taken to denote the widening and deepening of social relations and institutions across the borders of nation-states and at increasing intensity. Globalisation, thus interpreted, implies at least two distinct phenomena. Firstly, it suggests that many chains of political, economic and social activity are becoming worldwide in scope. Secondly, it suggests that there has been intensification of levels of interaction and interconnectedness within and between societies. Accordingly, what is new about the modern global system is the stretching of social relations in and through new dimensions of

activity and the chronic intensification of patterns of interconnectedness mediated by such phenomena as modern communication networks and new information technology. In short, globalisation tends to mean the world's contraction as a global village, which is also dependent upon a common ideology.³

In the words of Raymond Williams, in the contemporary world, the term 'culture' can be defined as the total pattern of human behaviour, and, cultural facets like language, ideology, literature, life style and rituals etc., are the manifestations of this total pattern of behaviour. Its products are embodied in speech, action and artifacts.⁴ In this context, the idea of a universal or global culture generally implies the cultural coming together of humanity and the increasing acceptance of common values, beliefs, orientations, practices and institutions by peoples throughout the world. This concept is a distinctive product of Western civilization and it rests on one or more of three assumption: First, there is the assumption that the breach of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of Soviet Communism meant the 'end of history' and the universal victory of the ideology of liberal democracy throughout the world. Second, there is the assumption that increased interaction among peoples is generating a common world culture. Improvements in transportation and communication technology have indeed made it easier and cheaper to move around the world. The third and the most general argument sees it as the result of the broad processes of modernization that have been going on since the 18th century.

However, the central elements of any specific culture or civilization are language, religion and social history. If a universal civilization is emerging, there should be tendencies towards the emergence of a universal language, a universal religion and a common social history of the global community. In this sense, English is the world's way of communicating inter-culturally. For this it presupposes the existence of separate cultures. It is a tool for communication, not a source of identity and community. Considering a universal religion, the late 20th century has seen a global resurgence of religions around the world. That resurgence has involved the intensification of religious consciousness and the rise of fundamentalist movements. It has thus reinforced the

differences among religions. The hope for a 'common way of life' throughout the globe also resides on the above two aspects. Because of these realities, the opponents of globalisation define the globalisation process as a part of 'cultural imperialism' of the West towards the rest of the world. In their view, the relations between the globalisation process and popular culture are more important here.

Concerning 'popular culture', ethnologists define it as the 'little tradition' of a given society. In understanding this definition, it is useful to explain their approaches to 'culture' in some detail. For example, in Dawa Norbu's words, 'culture' means any world religion induced cultural system which is invariably literate, usually complex and characteristically all pervasive, but incurably traditional. As a complex literate culture, it constitutes the great tradition maintained by the literate strata of a traditional yet complex society. And, as an all-pervasive popular culture, it naturally forms the little tradition of the masses. Further, according to him, as a literate culture, its writing system provides a pan-ethnic communication system that minimizes linguistic fragmentation into numerous mutually unintelligible dialects as in pre-literate cultures. Central then to his concept of culture is its literacy, which makes in the first place its articulation, then recording and transmission possible. Accordingly, in his analysis, the concept of culture consists of the following essential components; popular religious texts which constitute the core of national tradition, a pantheon of culture heroes who signify cultural and social lineage, a national writing system which is made not only into a unifying national communication system but also sometimes symbolizes nationality, and a social history, which collectively differentiates its subject as a whole from generalized others. The notion of social history presupposes that whenever the conversion and adoption is successful, the world-religion in question brings about a gradualist but great social transformation. That transformation may have taken many centuries and this tradition marks a critical transition from pure religion to concrete culture; it involves the social act of translating religious values into social practice. Hence, functionally, culture is the forerunner of ideology, meaning a body of popular values, symbols and ideas that embody a particular people's outlook on life and society. It may be classified into two

categories; popular culture and elite culture. The former is acquired primarily through socialization and the latter through education as well. Accordingly, the great tradition is cultivated in educational institutions and/or religious places; the little tradition works itself out and keeps it self going in the lives of the masses in a given society.⁵

Broadly speaking, the Western critics who analysed the popular culture have done so through six different ways; namely, through quantitative aspects, by evaluating the difference between elite culture and non-elite culture; as a mass cultural model; as a mirror of the common way of life; as a way of protest to powerful strata of society and through post-modernist ideas. All these assumptions, however, in one way or another, seem to be related to the ethnologists' 'little tradition' approach.

Identification of the Problem

When examining globalisation and its impact on Sri Lankan culture in the light of the preceding conceptualisation, several important factors demand attention. In Western society the notion of 'popular culture' is a result of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment Movement within European history that had far-reaching socio-political and cultural consequences for the modern Western world. There are a number of predominant factors to be found in the intellectual thought of this period. A useful list is given by Paul Hamilton (1996) and that includes the following: the primacy of reason and rationality, empiricism, the rise of Science as an important cultural and intellectual factor in contemporary society, universalism, a progressive view of History, individualism, a powerful rhetoric of freedom, the uniformity of human nature, representative institutions and secularism. The classical legacy, Catholicism and Protestantism, European languages, and social pluralism have been the major contributory factors in shaping this transformation. Accordingly, the roots of contemporary Western culture are established in the soil of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. The term 'Enlightenment' itself suggested a differential and negative appraisal of the previous era of the 'Dark Age' and that reflected two aspects; namely, the modern concept of 'progress', and modernity's self-

conscious rupture with what preceded it, sometimes polarized as 'traditional versus modern'. In this context, especially after industrialization and urbanization, popular culture became a strong reality in the West and it meant the plurality of social values shared by the majority in the society. Accordingly, modern popular culture overwhelmed the medieval isolated cultures.⁶

Against this background, like in most other countries in Asia, the story of modernization and modern social mobilization in Sri Lanka can be traced back to the nineteenth century and it has been a direct result of British colonial rule. In other words, the South-Asian modernization attempt, including that of Sri Lanka, was not deeply rooted in native soil, as it happened to be in the West. It took place, instead, owing to the endeavours of the colonial power during the time. Before the introduction of those modernization elements, traditional Sri Lankan culture was deeply-rooted in religious values based on native religions, i.e. Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. As a whole, traditional culture consisted of the four basic components explained in the preceding section. It is against this integral system that European influences were introduced after the sixteenth century. While Portuguese and Dutch influences were marginal, the societal and cultural consequences of British rule were profound and pervasive. The structural changes introduced in 1833 can be seen as the first step of that modernization process. Accordingly, growth of the plantation economy, introduction of English education, expansion of evangelical movements and acceptance of Western institutions and Western social values, were the new levers of that transformation. In short, transition from 'traditional' to 'modernity' was expected through the implanted Western values, and the new framework based on the success of individualism was entrusted with the responsibility of leading the individual towards active participation in society.

Concerning the pace of social mobilization during the time, although the country had remained basically as an agricultural nation, several shifts in the society could be identified. Education and literacy in particular had been expanding steadily since the late nineteenth century. However, in the broader sense, the competitive struggle for

social mobility had also been imported into the country with the advent of modernization. So from the beginning, only a small fraction of the whole population was affected by the above attention: despite the fact that nearly three quarters of the population lived in rural areas (village community), they were relatively less affected compared to the urban sector. Accordingly, the transformation from rural to urban conditions – one of the major aspects of modernization – was a relatively insignificant element in Sri Lanka. Hence, although vast social changes had occurred in the name of modernization during the British period, many of the elements of the traditional village culture continued in rural areas even in the early forties.⁷ This general background deserves to be kept in mind when examining the ‘popular culture’ in post-modern Sri Lanka and the impact of globalisation on that culture.

ASPECTS OF ‘CULTURAL RELATIVISM’ OR ‘CULTURAL ISOLATIONISM’ AND THE SRI LANKAN EXPERIENCE

Under Western dominance in South-Asia, traditional cultural forms were embedded in a field of power relations and the case of Sri Lanka was no exception. Especially, the notion of ‘the Mystical East’ became a theme within the Western understanding of Asia, particularly in relation to scholarly and missionary approaches to the study of native cultures in the region. Even though the study of Asian cultures could have aroused an interest in cross-cultural engagement, the nineteenth century ideology of ‘Western superiority’ played an integral part in the very act of understanding, interpreting and studying ‘other cultures’. In particular, it would seem that dominant representations of Western culture had tended to subordinate what might be called the ‘Dionysian’ aspects of culture and traditions. These characteristics represent precisely those qualities that had been ‘discovered’ in the realm of ‘the Orient’. In particular, they saw Asian cultures as based on ‘primitive’ superstitions and accordingly, they emphasised the burden of the White Man in ‘civilizing’ these Asian countries. The path of that ‘modern’ civilization was paved through Christian religion, English education and associated social values of the West. On the other hand, the internal dynamism and heterogeneity of local cultures and their interaction rendered ‘cultural isolationism’ an adequate response to the supposed

'quagmire of cultural relativism'. It is in this context that Eurocentric differentiation of cultures and its negative aspects towards the Asian values could later be branded under the theme of 'Orientalism'. The problem with the particular form of cultural relativism that some scholars have labelled as 'cultural isolationism' is that it presupposes an absolutistic and monolithic conception of cultures, based upon the nationalist model. The 'cultural isolationism' therefore, is that it has taken the classification of humankind into 'cultures' or 'nations' as constitutive of the way things are, rather than simply as the way the world had been divided up since the eighteenth century by Europeans.⁸

As such, 'the dialogue' which was established when European and Asian cultures met in Asia implied the vital differentiation of each other's 'tradition' or 'form of life', which was also constantly 'transcending' itself. On the one hand however, this orientalist view could be said to have given birth to the 'Asian Renaissance'. As it helped Asians find an indigenous identity in the modern world they began to modernize Asian culture from within. So, European colonial influence upon culture and religion has profoundly altered its nature in the modern era. In particular, one can highlight two ways in which Western influence has contributed to the modern construction of Asian religions: first, by locating the core of Asian religiosity in certain texts (the textualization of religion) and second, by an implicit tendency to define religion in terms of a normative paradigm of religion based upon contemporary Western understandings. These two processes are clearly interwoven in a highly complex fashion. European translators of those texts were also Christian missionaries or Anglicist administrators. Thus, the oral and 'popular' aspect of religious tradition in Asia was either ignored or decried as evidence of the degradation of contemporary religion into superstitious practices that bore little or no relation to their own texts.

However, classifying Buddhism as a world religion might seem less problematic than classifying Hinduism so, since it has a significant historical presence in a variety of cultural milieus. Accordingly, *Buddha-Dharma* first became Buddhism and then Buddhism became a world religion. In the broader analysis, Buddhism and Hinduism and their sacred literature have not been wholly silenced by the Orientalist

gaze. It is in this sense that we should see the construction of Orientalist notions such as Buddhism and Hinduism as the product of a process of intercultural mimesis. As Frits Staal (1989) argues, the significant factor in this interaction was that Western influence has resulted in changing Asian traditions into Asian religions.

On the other hand, in this transformation, as Macauley expected, this 'dialogue of cultures' was successful in 'forming a class who may be interpreters between Europeans and the millions whom they govern'. The specific nature of this construct was the product of an interaction between the Western Orientalist and the local elite. The administrative and academic demand for the literacy and ritual expertise of the elite placed them in a position of direct contact and involvement with their imperial rulers. This construct, of course, was subsequently adopted by nationalist leaders in their quest for self rule and in response to British hegemony. Because of this situation, post-colonial South-Asian civilization is defined by some scholars as 'not a rational transformation but fundamentally a product of its environment and a defective product of that'.⁹

STRATEGIES AND PROCESSES OF 'DISSEMINATION' AND 'DIFFUSION'

With long-standing Western cultural impacts in the nineteenth century, the process of cultural modernization in South Asia was basically modelled on Christian missionary organizational and tactical prototypes. It manifested a literary bias and one could find a strong scholarly emphasis upon the text as the locus of religion. At the same time, because of the influence of Western scientific rationalism, scholars attempted to legitimize their work by establishing methodologies and avoiding subjective prejudices. The rise of secular humanism also had an impact on new education systems.

On the other hand, in the popular sense, one could identify three new trends; tradition was treated as the life force of the society, collective cultural memorization techniques were given priority, and feminism was introduced to the cultural modernization process. When looking at

religion as tradition, it is used as a minor variation of culture. There were perhaps two powerful images of Asian religiosity during the time; one was the continually enduring notion of the 'mystical East's spiritual sense' that they perceived to be lacking in modern Western culture. In other words, as Europeans claimed, the emphasis upon the spirituality of Asia and the material superiority of the West allowed Asians to turn Western colonial discourse to their own advantage. 'The West may have material prosperity and power, but it lacks the inner spiritual life that is present in South-Asian culture' had been the reform leaders' answer to that assumption. Focusing upon the text-based world religions, (what Robert Redfield called the great tradition of a given culture) reformers focussed their attention on the marginalisation of more localized religious forms. It is true, for example, to say that the phenomenon of 'Protestant Buddhism' reflects to a significant degree the internalisation of Protestant Christian attitudes and presuppositions by the new Western-educated middle classes in Sri Lanka. A clear example of this can be found in the critique provided by *Anagarika* Dharmapala of the corruption or degradation of 'village Buddhism'. Hence, memorization techniques such as the use of mnemonic patterns and stylistic repetitions were frequently adopted to aid the transmission of knowledge among the masses. The second image of Eastern religion was that of the 'militant fanatic'. The gap between original religions and their contemporary beliefs and practices was filled by the rise of those resurgent movements. In the Hindu revival, movements 'such as 'neo-Vedanta' and 'Brahmanization' were important. To some extent, these processes had been effective means of assimilating diverse cultural strands within one's locality, and maintaining social and political authority. Groups such as Theosophical societies, *Brahmo Samaj*, *Arya Samaj* and the Ramakrishna Mission were important in these new religious efforts.¹⁰

In the final analysis, however, the new Buddhism that emerged from those resurgent movements was moulded into the new rationalist thought of the West which emphasised the scientific, rational and reformist aspects of Buddhism at the expense of its more popular practices. The new intelligentsia, educated in colonially established institutions, and according to European cultural standards, had generally failed to criticize the essentialist stereotypes embodied in

post-colonial culture. This is what, some observers have called the second colonization in Asia.

A close examination of cultural revivalism and cultural modernization in Sri Lanka reveal several important factors that are relevant to our analysis on globalisation and its impact. First, it provides an example of the relationship of internal and external socio-economic forces to changes from classical colonial culture to neo-colonial culture. Even though the cultural factor was closely associated in nationalist mass mobilization in Asia, the Sri Lankan elite class, which spearheaded it and obtained self-rule was strongly alienated from the mass of people and the traditional culture of the state. According to some observers, the UNP rule from 1948 to 1956 had emerged as something of a transfer state; and unlike India where leaders like Gandhi and Nehru attempted to mould a new nationalist ideology from traditional cultural values and ideals, the Sri Lankan ruling class was culturally isolated from its masses. However, as the fact of internal dynamism had proved by the mid-fifties, if the emerging system were to survive with its accepted norms, it had to respond to the call for a change of that political culture. The *Mahajana Eksath Peramuna*'s (MEP) 'progressive orientation' towards that setting was the reason for its landslide victory in 1956. But the cultural revolution that failed in the following years and the nature of polarization of new forces in the aftermath of the 'Sinhala Only' Act, brought about a new political culture to the fore. Strengthening this scenario was the 'Sinhalese youth insurgence in 1971' which introduced a violent political culture in youth mobilization in a well-established Buddhist culture in Asia. The UNPs thrust in 1977 for a free and just (*Dharmista*) society rests on this realism. However, as the unchanged free-market culture proved, erosion of traditional cultural values took momentous strides during the time.¹¹

Concerning the 'culture' of a given society, as the South Commission has also noted, culture must be a central component of development strategies in a dual sense; on the one hand, the strategies must be sensitive to the cultural roots of society, and on the other hand, they must include the development of culture itself as a goal. Because traditional culture functions to preserve the existing social order, it is

essential that development be compatible with the basic social and cultural characteristics. At the same time, it is also imperative that due consideration be given to rural and urban development, and other development modalities and the impact that living conditions have on culture. In addition, awakening development awareness and heightening social cohesiveness, strengthening such modern cultural elements as democracy, social justice and social equality, and strengthening new kinds of cultural identity have been the necessities of the era. Similarly, as the South Commission (1990) has emphasised, the provision of education is a crucial component of the right to culture. However, the Sri Lankan experience under the 'open economy' seemed to be a reversal of this ideal.

Finally, however we define it, it is impossible to exclude science and technology from 'culture'. Science is an element of the intellectual component of culture; technology of the practical. But no serious or systematic attempt has been made to include these two components in the agenda of cultural development in the new state with the change of power from colonial to local leaders. On the other hand, no effective measure has been taken to initiate a 'hundred flowers bloom' notion in the post-colonial endeavours in creating a broad national and cultural ideology. Instead, power relations have given rise to separate cultural values based on ethnic group interests without any meaningful dialogue and interconnectedness. In this context, while ethnic groups were seeking traditional bonds beyond the national state boundaries, its outcome was manifested as a culture of violence by the late eighties. It is in this setting that one should examine the impact of globalisation on Sri Lankan culture.

'GLOBALISATION' AND NATIONAL CULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Farhang Rajae's explanation on the life of a culture or civilization is more relevant to this analysis. As he explains, in the life of every society one can identify three different situations, and in each, the function of the closing of the gap between tradition and change may take a different form. The first situation refers to the life of any culture in its normal

course; the second, when the culture of a society is in contact with another society on equal terms, at least in the minds of intellectuals; and the third refers to the situation where the interaction between the two cultures is unequal and the intellectuals of both cultures encounter each other with 'higher' and 'lower' attitudes. In the case of the second situation, the two cultures interact and as a result gain from one another on equal interests. The third occurs when a 'higher culture' presents a great challenge to the 'lower' one and under the 'globalisation' process, the Developing World operates within this third situation, i.e., under circumstances where a progressive, universal, self-augmenting and self-generating culture of 'modernity' challenges the more traditional and prevailing culture of their societies.¹² In other words, developing countries presently face a challenge in their encounters with the West. The technical aspects of modernity have enabled the contemporary civilization of the West to become 'global'. Its massive products have in turn undermined the normal process of life in the societies into which it has arrived. This constitutes the greatest dilemma of the impact of globalisation and according to some, this has become a problem of preserving the 'eternal yesterday' and encouraging the smoother emergence of the 'eternal tomorrow'. One observer has compared this 'disruption' with the function of a prism in the path of a ray of light.¹³ In his analysis, societies under this impact can no longer operate at a traditional pace and at the same time, they are not original and are not contributory players within the context of 'global civilization'. One contradiction relates to the successful way in which the West has been able to equate technical advancement with the modern secular global view and value system. It is commonly held that technical advancement could be achieved only through the complete adoption of Western ways.

Without exception, the Sri Lankan society also suffers from a similar fate in its interaction with the cultural milieu of modernity and technical culture. Her intellectuals operate in this difficult situation in the four key concepts of explanation, initiation, distinction and selection of this process. When, for analytical purposes we take the choice of 'democracy, development and culture' as the substance of the globalisation process, we can start with the assumption that we are in transition towards a global society. In this context, with regard to the

contribution of science and technology to cultural advancement, from the beginning of human history, technology has been the main agent in the long struggle upward from subsistence and imprisonment within nature. We are witnessing today, in the wide application of microelectronics, the possibility of embodying both mind and memory in virtually any machine or equipment devised by man. Parallel to this, we are experiencing radical developments in the new Biology. Molecular Biology, with the breaking of the genetic code and other discoveries, holds promise of many significant applications pertinent to the biological functioning of humans, other animals, and plants, many of which pose difficult ethical problems.

At the same time, with the emergence of an ever more sophisticated technology, life styles and aspirations in the industrialized countries have gradually adapted so as to permit the enjoyment of what we perceive as material progress. Hence, technology and science on which it is based, can be regarded as an autonomous force in creating new products and systems, and accordingly, new demands. However, in Sri Lanka, economic disparities are paralleled by scientific disparities. Lack of a scientific and technological infrastructure and suitable training facilities make the effective transfer of technologies from outside quite difficult. Added to this is the 'brain drain' in these vital sectors. At the same time, even though the moving forward must also involve looking back with renewed vigour at the legacy of pre-colonial forms of indigenous knowledge, and, to fail to do so is to accept as unproblematic western derived notions of modernity, the establishment of an indigenous capacity for science and technology has been a very complex affair.

As a whole, as the 'modern progressive way' of our post-colonial social history reveals, especially because of the uneven patterns of socio-economic development and resultant socio-economic disparities between the rural-urban dichotomy, the scientific and technological advantages of globalisation have not reached the majority of the people. For example, even after ten years of this global technological interconnectedness, how many academics in local university circles are strangers to the basic know-how of information technology and computer literacy? Penetration of the global mass media also reveals a nearly

similar reality. At the village level, shortages of electricity and underdeveloped reading habits, combined with economic disparities and hardships, severely curtail the expansion of mass communication as a power of global knowledge. 'Window watching' and 'listening habits' alone would not bring positive changes among the masses. This effect is in its strength conversely related to the age brackets of the population. The older generation generally takes a conservative attitude in their decisions. The younger generation, however, tends to be more receptive to anything novel, including new styles of behaviour, entertainment and inexpensive consumer commodities. In this context, advertisements can be seen as cultural carriers. According to their consumer messages, happiness is now measured by access to worldly goods. Added to these is the expansion of various types of service clubs, Non-Government Organizations and voluntary social activities, transcending the state-global divide and working on their own advice. Exclusive 'demands' by groupings such as Companions on a Journey and NGO Women's Forum among these, have posed a moral and ethical threat to the traditional values of the society.

The arguments on the spread of Western consumption patterns and popular culture around the world in creating a universal civilization and global culture need to be looked at through these realities. A slightly more sophisticated version of the global popular culture argument focuses not on consumer goods generally but on the media, and on cinema. According to some estimates, American control of the global movie, television and video industries even exceeds its dominance in the aircraft industry. Two American and two European organizations dominate the collection and dissemination of news on a global basis. This situation reflects two phenomena; the first is the universality of human interests in spheres such as love, sex, violence, mystery, heroism and wealth and the ability of profit-motivated companies to exploit those interests for their own advantage. However, entertainment does not equate cultural conversion. Secondly, people interpret communications in terms of their own pre-existing cultural values and perspectives.

However, as Joseph Nye argues, a distinction exists between 'hard power' which is the power to command, based on economic and military

strength, and 'soft power' which is the ability of a state 'to get other communities to want what it wants through the appeal of its culture and ideology'. Nye goes on to say that 'if a state's culture and ideology are attractive in its face value, others will be more willing to follow. Hence, 'soft power' is just as important as 'hard power'. Contemporary measure of this 'attraction' is seen as rooted in material success and influence.¹⁴

The notions of 'inner limits', 'outer limits' and 'innermost limits' of the globalisation process are important here. In this analysis, in 'innermost limits', the forces that mould society and culture arise from the actions and attitudes of countless individuals and are determined by their values, aspirations and motivations. Accordingly, a fundamental understanding of social forces and societal evolution cannot be achieved unless deep consideration is given to the 'innermost' environment of individual motivations. One facet of popular global culture has been shaped through this 'innermost environment' of human nature. Because of unlimited aspects of consumerism, dreams of material progress and various types of communal and religious fundamentalist views, it is manifested as a cultural deterioration in most countries.¹⁵ Sri Lanka has also been a case of this reality and accordingly, far more significant than economics and politics are problems of moral decline, cultural suicide and communal disunity. These include, increases in anti-social behaviour such as crime; drug use and violence; family decay including increased rates of divorce, illegitimacy, incest, teenage pregnancy, and single-parent families; a decline in social capital; general weakening of the work ethic; and a decreasing commitment to learning and intellectual activity manifested in lower levels of scholastic achievement.

When we repeat our analytical approach, the concept of culture consists of the essential elements of a religion, which constitute the core of national tradition; a national writing system which symbolizes nationality; and a social history. 'Popular culture' as the 'little tradition of the masses', signifies the popular customs, mores and worldview of a particular community of people. In this context, when we summarise the impact of globalisation on Sri Lankan culture, within the analytical scope, the study throws light on the following predictions on popular

culture; one of the core components of any complex social organization is culture, and neither political nor economic development on a national scale is successful without a reasonable degree of cultural and linguistic homogeneity, including a high literacy rate. In acquiring global knowledge in English in formalized structures, it has been unable to penetrate the educational system of the masses; only a small section of the well-to-do groups in the society have been successful in achieving global educational facilities. In day-to-day habits, the gap has increased widely under the process of globalisation. These unequal trends, on the one hand and social and political pressures on the other, have resulted in the more general use of indigenous languages. But this has been in vain. Outside of a relatively narrow elite, English does not even serve as a *lingua franca*. The post-colonial Sri Lankan state's inherent contradictions and *status quoism* that followed in wider cultural relations are standing against the equal assimilation of global achievements.

In the religious sector, the resurgence of fundamental movements among the three major communities works as an added negative impact on communal unity and national identity formation in the state. Christian conversions under various brands have seriously affected the tranquillity of the traditional social order. Forceful conversions, competition among fundamentalist groups, use of force in the name of religion and massacre of religious leaders etc., have surfaced as a threat to the prevailing order. On the other hand, the rise of Hindu and Buddhist inspired groups throughout the West demonstrates the current cultural significance of the idea of 'spiritualism' in the 'Mystic East'. In addition, under global trends, the view that religion is largely a matter of personal belief rather than a communal involvement is a prominent feature of the globalisation process. Hence, Asian religiosity is presently characterized by both the emerging 'universalistic' strand that focuses upon proselytization (for example, Sathya Sai Baba, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, neo-Vedanta, and transcendental meditation) as well as 'nationalist' strands that focus upon the historicity. The extreme example of this is the phenomenon that Robert Bellah labels 'Sheilaism' – named after a respondent he met by the name of Sheila who claimed to have

her own personal religion.¹⁶ 'Sheilaism', then, is the post-modern belief that one can have one's own religion.

Instead of anticipating the supposedly universal civilization and global culture based on a universal language and a universal religion, the requisites for cultural co-existence demand a search for what is common to most cultures in a given state. As global governance is impossible under the emerging multi-polar powers and, as nation states remain the principal actors in world affairs, primacy of Sri Lankan national identity in global affairs will remain unchanged. However, in a state's communal relations, contemporary reconfiguration along regional, cultural and ethnic lines can be seen as a powerful trend. As a lone country, while the Sinhalese community lacks cultural commonality with other regional or global societies, the other ethnic groups have the opportunity of 'culturally coming together' with their close relatives. But in our argument, if national leaders could identify the core values, which Sri Lanka's major ethnic and religious communities have in common and which capture the essence of being a Sri-Lankan, the above trend would be a positive impact in that direction. For example, the most important lone country in Asia is Japan. As a leading Japanese intellectual argued, historically Japan has gone through cycles of importation of external cultures and indigenisation of those cultures through replication and refinement, inevitable turmoil resulting from exhausting the imported and creative impulse, and eventual reopening to the outside world.¹⁷

Cultures, as Michael Walzer¹⁸ has argued, are 'thick'; they prescribe institutions and behaviour patterns to guide humans in the paths, which are right in a particular society. Minimal moral concepts of truth and justice are found in all thick moralities and cannot be divorced from them. As such, in their predictions, as Swami Vivekananda says in *India's Gift to the World*, every one of Buddha's teachings is founded in the Vedanthas and the teachings of Christ can themselves be traced back to the Buddha. Hence, indigenisation of Sri Lankan culture in the singular sense through global gainings must be the end-result of the cultural coming together of the global community. In this path, there

must be a social leadership that provides a system of adaptation in the global interconnectedness. As an Indonesian intellectual has appealed,

Front leaders , give an example
Central leaders, build up a social will
Rear leaders, watch the (mass of) people¹⁸

may be the ultimate prediction of emerging popular culture in Sri Lanka under the impact of the globalisation process.

Abbreviations

- UNP - United National Party (A political party)
MEP - *Mahajana Ekshath Peramuna* (A political party)

Notes

- ¹ For explanation see, Samuel P. Huntington (1997).
- ² For explanation see, Dawa Norbu (1992).
- ³ See, David Held (1995).
- ⁴ Explained in, Selo Soemardjan & Kenneth Thompson (1994). pp. 130-34.
- ⁵ Dawa Norbu in *Note 2*
- ⁶ See, Edward McNall Burns (1991).
- ⁷ For the general background see, Tissa Fernando and R.N.Kearney, (1979), eds.
- ⁸ Richard King (1999).
- ⁹ For instance see, Ashis Nandy (1983). pp.70-75

- 10 Richard King in *Note 8*, Chapters 6 & 7
- 11 For details see, Susantha Goonatilake (1984) and, Anula Attanayake (2001).
- 12 Cited and explained in *Note 4* pp. 39-53
- 13 *Ibid* pp. 111-133
- 14 Samuel P. Huntington in *Note 1*, Chapter 3
- 15 For details on this definition see, Alexander King 'Technology and Dr. Faustus' in *Note 4*, pp. 87-101
- 16 Cited and explained in Richard King in *Note 8*, pp. 12-13
- 17 See, William E Naff, 1985 & 1986, pp.219-20
- 18 Cited and explained in *Note 4*, p. 125

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