

Role of Civil Society in the Transformation of Social Values and Norms

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Abstract

People are the products of the values and norms of the society in which they live and are continuously in struggle to survive. In this context, norm is a kind of pattern of behavior that is generally expected to happen and is also accepted within a particular group of society so that we are bound to behave each other within our social and cultural norms. Values are the beliefs about maintaining, what is important for life, by selecting from between right and wrong. We have matters of moral values for maintaining our life style. Today we are living in the era of globalization and our social demands are also changing. Our contemporary social and cultural norms are divided on the basis of economic development distinguishing people and society from successful to failure. We have matter of high and low availability of technology for being successful or failure. The process of transformation of social values and norms is going on continuously for centuries. Older generations have passed and new ones have emerged with new ideology. The norms and values of one generation will not be of equal importance to the next generations. The social norms and values between India and Nepal are similar from the beginning of human races in these areas. In almost all tribes of similar category, there are similar social and cultural norms and values in India and Nepal, and also, there are similar places of worshipping the gods and goddesses. Although ours is a unique social and cultural environment, we are bound to meet the demands of the present generation in the era of globalization governed by information and communication technology where English language is as a driver of globalization as a vehicle. On the other hand, we have some challenges to preserve our culture and throw out some parts from our culture. It is because everything can't be right in the changing scenario of human beings. It has been of great urgent matter for the civil society to play the role of transformation of social values and norms. Our society is changing from more traditional beliefs to the modern knowledge technology. In this way this paper explores to analyse the role of civil society in the transformation of social values and norms. The methodology used for this paper will be document analysis and face to face open -ended interview with some members of civil society and social workers. The research questions to be answered will be "How can civil society bring changes in the existing trends of social values and norms around us? How will we be adjusted in the periphery of knowledge society and knowledge economy? What are the matters of being successful and failure with respect to technology today? How can we analyse the development of India in the 21st century?"

Key Words: Globalization, Technology, Social norms and values, Transformation of social and cultural norms and values, Matter of westernization today, Knowledge society and knowledge economy

Introduction

There are different kinds of forces acting in our societies which are believed to have capacity to direct communities towards them. These forces of society have been transformed from centuries to centuries. Some of them may be bearable while some others cannot be bearable. But society seems to be following them blindly due to being transformed since the long past. Those things which are agreed since former generation are also difficult to change. Civil society should take initiatives to transform beliefs with the modern communities. Regarding civil society, World Economic Forum (2013: 6) has written as follows:

Over the last two decades, civil society has evolved significantly. Viewed at a global level, civil society is flourishing. Technology, geopolitics and the markets have created opportunities and pressures, spurring the creation of millions of civil society organizations around the world, giving rise to exciting models for citizen expression both online and offline, and generating increasing involvement in global governance processes.

The process of society has changed much more rapidly than that in the past due to globalization. People have moved from one country to another and this situation has made people known about different kinds of socializing agents all round the world. Regarding globalization, Carnoy, (1999); Hirst et al. (1999) have written, "Globalization is a flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values and ideas and it is also known as mobility in many forms such as information, knowledge, people and employment" (as cited in Lam2010: 74). People are going to be as global citizens these days and cannot remain isolated in one cultural group.

The civil society has to play great role in reforming old traditions which have hampered in the global culture. There are debates about local and global cultures due to the forces of globalization.

Segbers (2009: 3) has defined civil society as follows:

Pragmatically, "civil society" is often understood and used as a concept synonymous with non-governmental organizations. Implicitly, the term is often reserved for "positive", enabling, "democratic" organizations. Conceptually, the concept forms a bridge between individuals and voluntary associations and the public sector by creating a societal or social level of interests and actions.

In Nepal and India, there are similar cultures since long ago. Regarding this situation, Bista (2001: 19) has written as follows:

The cultures of the northern Gangetic plains have greatly influenced Nepal in every in every respect from pre-historic days. There may have been early arrivals from these plains, including the Buddhist Shakyas, the Koliya, the Malla, and sometime later the Lichhavis and Guptas.

The former rulers of Shah dynasty also were of Indian origin. About their history Wikipedia, Free Encyclopedia has mentioned as follows:

According to legends, one of the earliest Shah rulers was Rishi-raj Rana-ji, of the lunar dynasty. He was made ruler of Chittorgarh and received the title of Bhattarak. The lunar dynasty remained in power for thirteen generations. Then, the Muslim Yavanas took power. The Bhattarak had to abdicate and could only retain his caste family name, Rana-ji. The rajas were titled Rana-ji for four generations and Rana-ji Rava for a further seventeen generations.

Chittorgarh is a city in Rajasthan, India. It is tried to mention that India and Nepal are the two independent countries which have the same root and origin. The Teej festival which is celebrated by Women in Nepal is also from Chittorgarh, Rajasthan, India.

History of Shah Dynasty has written as follows:

The Royal House of Nepal claims descent from the Chitor dynasty ruling at Udaipur. Ajaya Simha (alias Mincha Khan), younger son of Bhupal Ranaji Rao, established himself as Prince of Nayakot, Lambjang, Kaski, and Tanhun ca. 1495. His successor, Jagdeva Khan, conquered the principality of Kaski and secured the title of Shah from the Emperor of India during the sixteenth century.

In this way the relationship between Nepal and India is tied up from many centuries back in the past and the same process is going on till today and will continue accordingly in the future days to come.

Development of India in the 21st Century and Nepal

The development of India in the 21st century is highly praiseworthy. Indian leaders are highly dedicated for the development of their country although some debates appear among them. Nothing, such as political change, stops in the process of development of a country if there is a well developed system. The system is found in India. India has secured fourth position in the sector of economic development in the world today, which is a great achievement for India as well as neighbouring countries. Advancement in the sector of technology has made India a successful country. Moreover, India's developed civil society makes Nepal's civil society transform social norms and values.

About Indian Economy, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia has mentioned as follows:

The economy of India is the seventh-largest economy in the world measured by nominal GDP and the third-largest by purchasing power parity (PPP). The country is classified as a newly industrialised country, one of the G-20 major economies, a member of BRICS and a developing economy with an average growth rate of approximately 7% over the last two decades. The long-term growth prospective of the Indian economy is positive due to its young population, corresponding low dependency ratio, healthy savings and investment rates, and increasing integration into the global economy. The Indian economy has the potential to become the world's 3rd-largest economy by the next decade, and one of the largest economies by mid-century.

India has developed in both rural and urban sectors which has transformed the ideology of the members of civil society from traditional superstition belief to modern knowledge society and economy. India has successful hands in both sectors of agriculture and

industry. Road building and transportation is also of high standard such as Yamuna Express Highway from Delhi to Agra. Railway line is also of highly developed. Metro system in Delhi is of world class. In the field of education both liberal arts and technology are of high quality. The educational institutions such as IIT, NIT and JNTU have provided quality education in the sector of technical education. In almost all universities, there is research based education. As a whole, people's life standard is high in term of civil society.

Some Social Norms and Values: Need of transformation

This paper aims to mention some beliefs, as norms and values of the people of Nepal which needs major reformation, and for this, it is the role of the civil society to play to make reformation of the things and beliefs which affect directly to the human beings of that place.

Our life is influenced by some cultures which have been followed by former generations for centuries which have been natural. Culture is a powerful force on us which is learned from society. Values are known as such types of ideas which we consider to be good, desirable and important to our life. And norms are socially accepted and not accepted behavior in particular social life. There are different norms and values according to cultures and religion of a group of human beings. They are also known as superstitious beliefs. This paper introduces and analyses some of the beliefs of Nepalese people; Chhaupadi Tradition, Deuki Pratha and Witchcraft existing in some Nepalese societies.

Chhaupadi Tradition

In western part of Nepal, chhaupadi pratha is known as a tradition which is practiced by the communities for centuries. This tradition banishes females during their menstruation period from their houses. The people have made separate houses for females to live during this time. The females have been untouchables during this time. They will be kept in a small and narrow hut or it may be a cowshed away of the house where they have to pass a life like that in hell. Regarding this situation, Rebaud (2011) has written as follows:

It's a small house, a hut or a cowshed, a little away from the houses of Ruga village, in the heart of Mugu, one of Nepal's most remote districts hidden in the Himalayas. The roof is so low that an adult struggles to stand up; the entrance is so small that the sunlight barely finds its way in. In summer the rain pierces the roof and the snakes crawl inside. In winter, the cold is cutting. The tradition of chhaupadi isolation continues unabated in Western Nepal. In the local language, "chhau" refers to menstruation, "padi" to women. Sometimes the goths welcoming the chhaupadis are former cowsheds. Often, they still shelter cattle and the women have to coexist with the buffaloes. Families who break the tradition are pushed away from their village or community.

Although this tradition was banned in 2005 by law, it is still practiced in the same way. When the ladies are kept in a dirty place, like cowsheds, they are likely to be attacked by different diseases.

The people (male and female) of that area were found and interviewed them to know more about this tradition as follows:

1. What is the view of the male persons about the 'chhaupadi tradition'?

In response to this question, the reply of male persons was that it was a tradition transferred from many generations to the later generations. There were different views about this tradition. Their main view was that during the time of menstruation if ladies stayed at home with other family members, their god would be angry and any kind of misfortune would happen in the family. Their belief was that the misfortune would be breaking parts of body of a family member, being sick and even death. Ladies could not be touched during this period.

2. What is the view of females about the 'chhaupadi tradition' ?

On the other hand, females gave their response that it was hell for them. They had to stay in a small, narrow and short hut in which they could not stand up, move and sleep easily. The hut would be made away of the house which would be like a deserted house in an isolated place. The place for females would be fixed in cowshed in many families. The place would be very dirty. They had danger of snakes, insects, flies, harmful germs, diseases and rape case, too, because the family members would not take care of them being nearer to them. In this way, it was to cross the hellish path for the females of this area such as Achham district of Nepal to pass five days, mainly, after monthly period.

3. How will this tradition be eliminated?

This question was asked to some educated persons and human rights activists, who knew this 'chhaupadi tradition. Their response was that although law has banned this system, it is still in practices as before. This was due to weak application of law. The political leaders kept fighting for only the protection of their chair in central level but they did not take care to reform evil activities in society. Such type of evil torture to women and girls could be stopped if the civil society of that place would be active and motivated, that such things as 'chhaupadi' was only a superstitious belief and it had no link with gods or goddesses directly.

Witchcraft

To know more about superstition and witchcraft, some people of terai origin were interviewed as below:

1. What do you think about witchcraft as believed in Nepalese and Indian communities?

In some of the communities of terai region and remote hilly region, people have deep belief on witchcraft and witches. If someone becomes sick in such

communities, a woman or a man of the village will be accused of having knowledge of witchcraft and until this is removed from the body of the sick person the sick person will not be well. The respondents responded that they have somehow belief in witchcraft and witches. One of the respondents said that her child had been sick due to witchcraft of a village person and when the child was treated by a witchdoctor, the child became well but medicine could not do any good for the child. So, she had belief in witchcraft and witches.

Similarly, there are many cases in which some poor and weak people are blamed as witches. They are beaten and even fed toilet into their mouth. Although, police arrest such types of people and give punishment, the same system is still taking place. To control such types of superstitious beliefs, civil society has to play vital role. All of the superstitious beliefs are transferred from centuries to the later generations and transformation of idea is needed.

Some other practices which need reformation are as follows:

Deuki Tradition

In remote districts of the Mahakali and Seti zones young girls are offered to deities as a sacrifice to fulfill their wishes for health recovery, bearing son, and other accomplishments. The girls will be either one's own daughters or the ones purchased from poor families. The girls offered thus are required to spend their time in caring for the temple and live on whatever cash and support are obtained as worshipping offering. They are restricted to marry and are really helpless and baseless. This is known as deuki tradition in some parts of Nepal.

Jhuma System

Similar to the Deuki system is Jhuma system in the Sherpa community in the eastern part of Nepal. Jhuma is known as the second of the three or more daughters offered to a gumba. Jhumas are not allowed to lead a married life. If any child from illicit relation is born, has to stay in gumba. The son is made priest (lama) of the gumba. Sherpas also offer the second son who has to live as Dhawa. In this way Deuki and Jhuma systems are disgusting evils of the Nepalese societies and need to be abolished as soon as possible.

Globalization and Social Changes at Present

Due to the advancement of globalization, people have made movement all round the world which has made drastic changes in the style of previous social style. Previously, people depended on agriculture and animal husbandry but today many people have taken the profession of job and business and they have also chosen the place of work in the urban area. Today people prefer to live in urban area rather than in the rural area. This is due to the development and availability of modern technology in urban area. Globalization and technology have affected the life styles of the people today. Regarding this situation, Ghosh (2012:242) has stated as follows:

Globalization is ubiquitous in the contemporary world even though we often criticise or oppose certain processes associated with it. Our economic, social, cultural and political

life today is rapidly drawn into much wider and faster networks of „virtual localities“. As a corollary, individuals, groups and communities irrespective of cultural or geographical boundaries are progressively drawn into networks beyond time and space. Persons opposing 'globalization' constitute a part of it and they do so by being empowered with a technology across space, which is a product of globalization itself.

Today we have impact on our life style of the forces of globalization in terms of knowledge society and knowledge economy. It is due to the new technology we have to be habituated with; as a matter of western civilization for which we may say as westernization of our living styles. We have threat on our local culture due to globalization and transformation of social norms and values. We have to think on the matter of fashion and food today. The matter of westernization has affected us in such a way that they say fashion show for not wearing clothes as we do; they show half naked body to make fashion show. Although, it is acceptable for them, it will not be acceptable for us; Indians and Nepalese people. We choose language of education, English, that is a language of western people. We make dress in the style of western people and celebrate festivals in their ways. Technology has also transformed our social characters like that of western people. So, if we follow western style, we are developed but if we follow our own tradition, we are known as in an uncivilized rural style. Although globalization has given threat to our local culture, it has made our life easy by transforming unwanted social norms and values.

Conclusion

There are many cultural norms and values followed all over the world which need reformation not to give trouble and torture to the particular group of people. In Nepal, chhaupadi tradition, deuki tradition, belief in witchcraft and untouchability should be eliminated for which civil society should play major role.

Today's digital age has fostered knowledge society and improved knowledge economy. The system of new economy emerged due to the process of globalization which made new means of production establish around the world and goods were supplied all over the world. Establishment of World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank which helped countries with financial and human resource and knowledge by bringing changes in local cultures.

Taking the base of globalization and technology, our civil society should try to change local culture which cannot be accepted; such as chhaupadi, deuki, witchcraft, touchables, untouchables and superstition which have no factual root. We have information- based society due to modern technology. Instead of being attached to superstitious beliefs which have no reality, civil society should play role to attach people on intellectual property. To eliminate unwanted behavior of people in societies, civil societies should conduct awareness programmes in societies. By doing awareness programmes and applying rules to eliminate evil things, civil society can bring changes in the existing evil

trends of social norms and values. Education should also try to eliminate social evils. As a whole, civil society should play role to protect members of communities from being tortured.

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