

The Impact of Valentine's Day over Pakistan

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Abstract

There are different societies of the world in which there are different people with different cultures. In this paper we will discuss the impact of one culture over the other. More precisely effect of cultures of different countries over the culture of Pakistan, and how Pakistan perceives and reacts over the cultures of other countries. Most importantly Valentine's Day as a curse upon Pakistan will be discussed briefly under the light of current circumstances of 2016.

Keywords: Culture, Valentine's Day, Pakistan

1. INTRODUCTION

E.B. Tylor defines culture as a complex whole in which knowledge, art, belief, moral laws, customs are included and any other habits and capabilities that are acquired by a man behaving as a member of a society (Tylor, 1974). So according to Tylor culture includes many things in it the way we behave in our society is shaped by our culture the knowledge and art we gain is dependent on the thinking of a society. If we define culture in the words of Cambridge English Dictionary it states as it is the way humans live their life moreover, it deals with the beliefs and customs of a specific group of people at a specific time. Culture shapes our thoughts our behavior and the way we live in a society. It is always dynamic, it changes as the time passes and it takes influence from other people and other cultures.

From the above discussion we can come to a notion that the thing that plays the vital role in the making of a culture and its other parts is language as (Duranti 1997) says that language plays the main role in delivery of a culture, we learn practice and share culture through language. It is an essential part of the culture.

According to Berger & Luckmann (1985), we are all socialized into a community through ordinary use of language it plays the role of medium in making of a community. "The first, most basic, and all pervasive element of [...] culture is control of the native language" (Hadley 1993: 361). It is language that makes our surroundings meaningful to us. Our thoughts are not preceded by language nor do we use language as a handy tool only to express our thoughts, but language is the main thing that helps us make our thoughts (Vagle, Sandvik & Svennevig 1993).

The hypothesis of 'Sapir-Whorf 1929' works as the central argument in explaining the association and relation between culture and language. According to him, he argued that human beings do not live in an objective world on their own nor do they only live in a communal world as everyone thinks. Rather, he says that they are at the mercy of the language which become their medium of speech in their society.

There are numerous differences between the cultures of the East and that of the West. These differences are not only because these people live in different regions of the world but there are many other factors that counts in it, their way of living, their environment, education, their personalities and their attitude towards life.

There is a difference of even expression of love, Eastern people does not use words to express their love they focus more on action i.e. buying a present or a big bouquet of flowers on the other hand western people focus more on saying "I love you" and creating a romantic scene even in public. A western girl, if she loves, will marry a poor man and will feel satisfied. On the other hand Eastern girl will not just marry someone because she loves him but will see social, economic and educational background also. Moreover even if she tries to marry him there would be hindrance from the part of parents and will not allow her to do so.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Valentine's Day is celebrated in the memory of Saint Valentine who was sentenced to death in his era by the local government. His crime was that he helped soldiers marry when they were not allowed to, and during his execution he wrote a farewell letter to the daughter of his jailer expressing his love to her and writing 'your valentine' in his last letter. He was buried in Rome, and his relics were taken to the church of St. Praxedes Guiley. In the 14th century in the era of Geoffrey Chaucer, this day was celebrated when the country love flourished. In 18th century it was rampant in England as a day of love sharing between young couples. It was the tradition of that time that young couples give on another gifts, flowers, greeting cards and saint valentine's keys, the purpose behind the keys was to allow other sex to have the access to the heart of opposite gender. Since the 19th century the trend of hand written cards has begun and it has resulted in mass production of cards only for this purpose. Valentine's Day is an official feast day in Anglican communities. It is also celebrated in different Eastern orthodox churches. Chaucer has also given the reference of Valentine's Day in his poetry, Parlement of Foules (1382) as he states

“For this was on seynt Volantynys day
Whan euery bryd comyth there to chese his make.”
(For this was no Saint Valentine’s Day
When every bird comes there to choose his mate)

Other than Chaucer we have very few examples of quotation of Valentine’s Day as a day associated with love. People have associated Valentine’s Day with the time when birds start mating. After it we have several references of people quoting Valentine’s Day in their poetry in 15th, 16th and 17th century.

2.1 STATUS IN THE MODERN WORLD

Its customs were first developed in modern England and then it spread in 19th century in Anglo sphere. After this its customs spread in other countries in late 20th and early 21st century but their effect was limited than those of Christmas and Halloween. It is also celebrated in eastern countries with china and South Korea spending the most money on Valentine’s gifts, this is because of the concentrated marketing efforts. But now because of the advancements in social media and other internet resources the world has become global village and transfusion of different cultures is a common thing for a modern man. There are many things that Pakistani’s and more precisely Muslims of Pakistan have adopted from westerns. Among them Valentine’s Day have got much significance and is appreciated by modern generation but with its arrival many problems have arisen which needs attention. Valentine’s Day was introduced in Pakistan in late 1990’s through radio and television programs.

3. ANALYSIS

There are different societies of the world possessing different cultures and ethics. As Pakistani we have our own festivals and traditions same is in the West as they have their own. World is a global village now because of the advancements of science and technology, now we can interact with each other and be aware of the cultures of other people as a result we become aware of the other societies, on the basis of this we adopt or reject the cultures and beliefs they already have. There are different traditions which are present in Europe and Pakistani people follow them but not exactly the same as Westerns do. We can have the example of New Year ceremony. In Western countries there is a complete function of New Year, people wear new dresses, make different delicious food, decorate their houses and go for prayers so that their new year could be full of happiness as they are celebrating their first day of the year. There have different functions and dance competitions on this very day. Westerns celebrate New Year like ‘as a part of their religious customs’. On the other hand Pakistani’s do not celebrate New Year as an obligatory function and many of them do not even bother about it. But in this paper our discussion is about the celebration of Valentine’s Day that has been being celebrated in Pakistan with zeal and zest now for a couple of decades. Pakistan being a Muslim country at first rejected the concept of Valentine’s Day but with the passage of time and because of media propaganda, it has been rising as a serious threat to dignity of Pakistan as the new generation of Pakistan is becoming obsessed with such an evil. In the past decade the problem has arisen swiftly and is spread in young generation like a virus. Why it is an evil and why it should be banned and prohibited especially in the Muslim world are the right questions. The very first thing that forbade Muslims to adopt such a cultural festival is the base on which this day is based. As history tells us it was an act of Lechery done by a man of noble class ‘Saint Valentine’. A Saint who was caught for the crime of Lechery and was hanged for the sin he committed. After his death, for two centuries no one started celebrating this day. Even in Christianity everyone thought of Lechery as a sin but with the passage of time and advancement in science and technology a propaganda began to make this day a day of remembrance of the lovers who lost their life on this day. Because of social media and vulgarity that this day presents, it became very eye catching for the young generation of the whole world. Every year at this day people of different ethnicities show their love to the other sex by presenting them with different gifts. In Pakistan it has been a serious issue for a past few decades. There are different reasons that are playing their part in the promotion of such a day and the most prominent in them is our social media and the hidden forces behind it. This paper will talk about the response of two classes of Pakistan about Valentine’s Day, one class that has accepted it and wants it to flourish and other class, who wants it to be banned. Those who have accepted it includes young generation who are not mature enough to decide right and wrong and the businessmen whose business flourishes when the day comes. The class that rejects it is the old generation that is stuck with their traditional but Islamic thoughts and the Islamic organizations like Jamat-e-Islami and others. Pakistani media is also promoting it vigorously by doing different functions and doing morning shows to promote the trend in the local public. They are also coming up with different telefilms in order to make this day memorable for people. Markets all over the developed cities of Pakistan are filled with toys, cards, flowers and other such gifts. Even the illiterate population of Pakistan is also aware of the spirit that is behind this day and they readily enjoy it. Unfortunately those who do not want to celebrate this day are forced to get reminded this day as whenever they step into market or a shop, without any hesitation, they are reminded of the very day by the products they see their. The people who still reject the celebration of this day are considered backward and most of the people of Pakistan have accepted this western

norm as their own. But now because of the rise of vulgarity and problems created by this day, the older generation has started protesting against it. They now are facing the after affects that such a day brings with it. In 2016 because of the protests by many people of Pakistan a small effort is made in order to stop this fuss to increase and flourish in Pakistan. President of Pakistan, Mamnoon Hussein, has clearly advised the people of Pakistan not to pay heed to this day as it is a norm of West and not of Islam. In his address he says that, "Valentine's Day has no connection with our culture and it should be avoided." (Dawn, February 13th, 2016). On the other hand the Peshawar district council collectively conceded a resolution in which they stressed the local government to put a ban on Valentine's Day celebration in the capital province. Moreover in Peshawar district council, the councilor's leader Mr. Khalid Waqas Chamkani also passed a resolution in which he stated that Valentine's Day had no room in our traditions and culture, and because of this, the government should take actions against it and should ban all the programs that were scheduled for the promotion of Feb 14. But some officials in the capital declined it as they say that they cannot suppress this tradition as a whole because of its acceptance on a wide scale. Yet the president criticized this day by declaring that it is a western import that has been laid upon us and is a threat to the Islamic values of Pakistan. Being a fact that it is a western holiday not of Muslims, President Mamnoon Hussein celebrating a ceremony of a nationalist leader said, "Valentine's Day has no connection with our culture and it should be avoided." Despite of its being a Christian holiday vendors all over the developed cities of Pakistan reported blooming sale of flowers this year and recent years. There is a fact that the problem of inflation comes with the arrival of Valentine's Day. The price hike can be seen in all over the Pakistan, there is a 40% increase in the prices of flowers, cards and other toys. Local media this year (2016) has also reported that Islamabad will ban the celebration of Valentine's Day as an "insult to Islam" but unfortunately local authorities refused by declaring that such a rule will be unenforceable. According to local media the northwestern city of Peshawar near afghan border also banned the celebration of this day. This year, as mentioned earlier, different authorities in Pakistan have taken different steps in order to stop or minimize the effect that this day has over people. PEMRA has also played its part and has taken a very bold step and ordered all the TV channels and radio stations not to air any program about or for Valentine's Day i.e. in terms of its promotion. The reason behind this step is that most of the people of Pakistan think this day as against their religious customs and beliefs. Moreover accepting a day like Valentine's Day mocks our values. Some people in Pakistan support this day by giving a lame argument that it is not necessary that everyone celebrates it in a negative way, they can celebrate it by wishing it to their parent, by showing love to their spouse etc. For these people one thing must be clear that as Muslims we do not need a specific time for the celebration, or for showing affection to our parents and relatives. We, as Pakistanis, give time to our families on daily basis so why we are following a rat race? Why we are going in a rat's alley from where we won't be able to come back even if we wish. We do not need Father's and Mother's day in our culture because we do not let our parents driven away from us to old man houses so we can share love with our parents on daily basis instead of yearly base. Religious activists in Pakistan and India have strongly condemned the celebrations of this day stating the reason that it is against Hinduism and Islam. In Bombay shiv-Sina group burned the cards and raided the shops as a protest against Valentine's Day. In Pakistan this day has been called as a day of shame and lust by fundamentalist students. A student leader Khalid Waqas Chankani states this day as:

"This is a shameful day. The people in the West are just fulfilling and satisfying their sex thirst."

Now if we see the other side of the picture, Valentine's Day is a blessing for the business class of every country. The Nation news published an article in which it states this day as a blessing for the flower sellers in all urban cities of Pakistan especially for the vendors of Islamabad. According to current research on them, the shopkeepers have stored tons of flowers especially red roses in their shops. Some of them start storing the fragrant roses in deep freezers a week before the day in order to save the headache of shortage of flowers on the very day. This day is celebrated with more enthusiasm than Eid and New Year as whole of the main market of Rawalpindi i.e. commercial market and Jinnah Supper in Islamabad put grand sales for Valentine's Day. Vendors and shopkeepers from the start of the February starts storing and decorating their shops and stalls with different items of Valentines i.e. Flowers, teddy bears, balloons, romantic books of poetry and other ornaments of different kinds. Chocolate is also one of the major selling products as business and companies make chocolates in heart shapes so to make it a selling product. I would like to quote the exact words of a shop seller at F-6 Flower shop as, "It is the biggest occasion for us from business point of view. The people, who want to have shopping for somebody special, don't argue over price. They willingly give the price they are asked for." Through this we can easily judge the craze people have in their mind about Valentine's Day. This day has now become a day to share intimacy, bonding and renewing of friendships and to let others know how one feels about others. I would like to quote a hadith for the imitation that people of Pakistan are doing.

MUHAMMAD (PBUH) said "Jo Koi Jis Qoum Ki Nqal Karega Wo Un hi Me Se Hoga."

(abu daud)

4. Conclusion

Cultures and transmission of cultures are two aspects of the modern age that cannot be denied or stopped completely because of internet, which has made this world a global village. Translation Studies, as a subject, not only translates one language into another but with it, it also transmits the cultures and norms that the source culture has. Unfortunately evil is accepted rapidly by everyone. Same is the case that happened in Pakistan as the people of Pakistan accepted the norms and values of other cultures because of the economical superiority those cultures have on our culture. Valentine's Day is a big threat to the values of Muslims because what it promotes is considered unethical and below the belt. So, I am really happy to see a positive rejection response from our government as well as from our people who have realized the fusses this day is creating and who are trying to stop and ban the rehearsing of this day in our Islamic country Pakistan.

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(Writing by Kay Johnson; Editing by Tom Heneghan)

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PREMA (SAUD)

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6. INDEX

بریکنگ نیوز: ہمرا نے لوگوں کی طرف سے شکایات پر
تمام ٹی وی چینلز کو ویلنٹائن ڈے پر نشریات سے روک دیا

**PAKISTAN ELECTRONIC MEDIA
REGULATORY AUTHORITY
ISLAMABAD**

PEMRA
F.No.13 (71)Ops/PEMRA/2013

PEMRA Headquarters,
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February 13, 2013

**ALL SATELLITE TV CHANNELS
ALL FM STATIONS**


Subject: Valentine's Day Celebrations on Satellite TV Channels

This is with reference to programmes to be aired on the forthcoming Valentine's Day falling on February 14, 2013.

2. It is generally observed that in the past "*Valentine's Day*" is celebrated on *February 14* by all the satellite TV channels whether an Entertainment or News & Current Affairs channel. PEMRA has been receiving complaints from a large segment of society that Valentine's Day celebrations are not in conformity to our religious and cultural ethos and has, therefore, condemned its unequivocal propagation through media. Furthermore, such events have been perceived as a source of depraving, corrupting and injuring morality of Pakistani youth as well as violating Code of Conduct developed by PEMRA in pursuance of Rule 15 & PEMRA Rules 2009.

3. All satellite TV channels/ FM Stations are, therefore, requested to honor viewer's sentiments / opinion while conceptualizing any program or celebrating any event connected to "*The Valentine's Day*". It is also requested that Content Review Boards may be made effective and responsible in order to scrutinize each and every program, before it goes on air.

4. It is earnestly believed that private satellite TV channels/ FM Stations and PEMRA can develop a synergy to ensure quality entertainment to the Pakistani viewers in accordance with our social, cultural, religious and ethical values.


Muhammad Farooq
Director General (Operations)

CC:
1. P.S. to Chairman PEMRA
2. Director General (Licensing)