Devoted Cosmopolitans: Estranged Pakistanis

(Dialectics of Class and Cosmopolitanism in an Elite Pakistani University)

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Abstract- Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Pakistan, this paper explores the relationship between cosmopolitanism and class in Pakistan. The participants of this research are young Pakistani men, who were studying in an elite Pakistani university at the time of fieldwork. The educational training and socialization of the informants has taught them to be 'global citizens' of the world as most of them will serve in key bureaucratic and administrative positions in Pakistan and abroad. By virtue of their training in an elite university, these young men were participating in a cosmopolitan version of Pakistani culture. The spectrum of meanings that international food chains, brands outlets and technological gadgets may have for young Pakistanis provides insights into the meaning and significance of the process of cosmopolitanism. Understandings of such things as McDonalds, for example, may change considerably depending on the socio-economic class of the individual and the particulars of cultural context. Whereas McDonalds currently carries working class connotations in most western settings, in Pakistan McDonalds has somehow obtaineda status symbol and is mostly consumed by upper or upper-middle class people who are located on the 'westernized'/ 'modernized' end of Pakistan's social spectrum. In this paper, we elucidate what 'being cosmopolitan' entails in Pakistani cultural context by distinguishing between consuming cosmopolitanism, living like a global citizen and understanding cosmopolitanism.

Keywords: **Cosmopolitan, Westernized, Modernization, Class, Pakistani Culture.**

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper deconstructs the nexus between class and cosmopolitanism in Pakistan. The participants of this research were young Pakistani men, who were studying in Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) at the time of field trip. Socialization and educational training of the participants has taught them to be 'global citizens' of the world as most of them will serve in key bureaucratic and administrative positions in Pakistan and abroad. By virtue of their training in an elite university these young men participatein a cosmopolitan version of Pakistani culture. It might appear paradoxical to challenge the classed orientation of cosmopolitanism in an elite educational institution of Pakistan i.e. LUMS. But we propose that it is in this setting that cosmopolitan performances of various social classes come into play and shed light on cosmopolitan understanding of elite educated Pakistani youngsters.

The idea of cosmopolitanism, which refers to global citizenship, is inherently Eurocentric and elitist. Miller (1995) argues that cosmopolitanism is living in this world at humanitarian level among differences merely at superficial level. However, this cosmopolitan version in Pakistan is mostly cantered on elitism. The phenomenon of elitism in Pakistan is closely linked to westernization and adoption of western culture. Hence, the concept of living at humanitarian level with differences ceases to exist in its truest sense. It becomes unidirectional and globally westernized. The tendency of society is thus culturally single instead of multiculturalism. There are unseen and unwritten pressures felt by the majority of the people which somehow influence them to tilt towards monoculturalism i.e. westernization and elitism. The structural pressure poised by elitism on cosmopolitanism has also been questioned by Marsden (2007) and he suggested that 'the open-enedness of cultural vision' should also apply to less fortunate global citizens. During the course of association of the people among each other for a long period of time, the urge and actions seem to be not just the part of globalization, but rather that of global elites. Hannerz

suggests that 'cosmopolitanism has two faces ... one is more cultural, the other more political' (2006, p. 9) and the relationship between culture and politics is inextricable. By reflecting on the cultural and political aspects of cosmopolitanism this paper aims to address two important points: Firstly, it challenges the long withstanding association between cosmopolitanism and elitism. Secondly, it addresses the difference between consuming and understanding cosmopolitanism in Pakistan. By using examples of English language usage and international food chains in LUMS I deconstruct the dynamics between class and cosmopolitanism in Pakistan.

Cosmopolitanism refers to a set of ideas which emphasize the values of tolerance, empathy, open-mindedness and respect for other cultures. Thus, cross-cultural intersection is an integral component of cosmopolitan ideology. Cosmopolitanism aspires to create a world without boundaries and, 'reaching out across cultural differences through dialogue, aesthetic enjoyment, and respect; and living together with difference' (Werbner, 2008, p. 2). Cosmopolitanism typically describes western liberal and elitist ideologies about global consciousness. It is considered that the more affluent will likely beglobal citizens. Cosmopolitanism embraces a vision of humanity in which 'humankind' becomes a 'we', facing problems where there are no 'others'' (Scholte, 2005). Many scholars have argued that cosmopolitanism privileges western understandings of what global citizenship encompasses (Aguiar, 2013; Kaur, 2011; Calhoun, 2007; Hannerz, 1996). In its belief of a "unified and peaceful realm of humankind," cosmopolitanism shows its ethnocentric roots since it underestimates the power of specific attachments in defining cultural, ethnic, religious, gender, racial, and other multiple identities (Tomlinson, 1999). The vision of global consciousness is merely a dream of humanity, since the term cosmopolitan is derived from Greek word 'cosmos' meaning universe and 'polis' meaning city (Aguiar, 2013). The paradox of local and global is inherent in the term cosmopolitanism.

Several post-colonial scholars have challenged the ethnocentrism of cosmopolitanism and suggested that there is a multiplicity of 'cosmos' having varied interpretations of what universal principles stand for in specific contexts. A pluralistic approach towards cosmopolitanism became the trend and developments in the field brought forward vernacular cosmopolitanism (Bhabha, 1996), discrepant cosmopolitanism (Clifford, 1992) and demotic cosmopolitanism (Parry, 2008). The pluralistic version of cosmopolitanism takes into consideration factors like gender, class, education, ethnicity and region (Cheah and Robbins, 1998; Werbner, 2008).

According to Fanon (1965), colonialism contributed greatly to the emergence of cosmopolitanism 'as colonialism's own victims ably seized upon the contradictions and envisioned their transcendence'(Go, 2013, p. 14). In this respect, postcolonial cosmopolitanism suggests an analytical understanding of the possibilities and downsides of Eurocentric and imperialism-backed cosmopolitanism. 'The universal and the particular; citizen and subject; assimilation and exclusion; equality and hierarchy – all of these oppositions were endemic to colonial rule and vital for it' (Go, 2013, p. 14). These oppositions are at the heart of criticism against cosmopolitanism. In an attempt to decolonize cosmopolitanism, Uimonen puts forward the idea of egalitarian cosmopolitanism, inspired by Nkrumah's political philosophy, which reaffirms 'the oneness of humankind in the sense of one world, while recognizing that cultural difference by no means negates the equal worth of all human beings' (2019, p. 18).

According to Hannerz (2007), there are two faces of cosmopolitanism: cultural and political. The cultural face of cosmopolitanism is a happy face since it refers to aesthetics, ethics, and value system. Whereas, the political face of cosmopolitanism is a sad face as it talks about world peace, national identities and border-crossing involvements with different places and cultures. In this paper, we have used Hannerz conceptual framework of cultural and political aspects of cosmopolitanism. We have discussed these theoretical concepts cosmopolitanism by using examples of English language usage and consumption practices of the informants. However, the political face of cosmopolitanism is discussed in relation to class politics at play in LUMS.

II. LUMS AND NOP SCHOLARS

LUMS is situated at the Defence Housing Society (DHA) which is considered as the Lahore's most affluent area. It is an expensive institute and only the wealthy can afford to send their children there. Unless they come on scholarship, LUMS students are the sons and daughters of industrialists, businessmen, politicians, and landlords or high-ranked public or private job holders in banking, telecommunication, and other industries of the like. The informants of this research are young educated men studying in LUMS during the fieldwork in 2012. The first author conducted interviews and focus group discussions

with students of all age groups and levels of education that is from Bachelor to doctorate. On the request, an email was circulated by the Anthropology head of the department, briefing research objectives. The students were invited to participate voluntarily in the research. 63 interviews and four focus group discussions were conducted. Besides, during participant observation, the first author came a across many students whom she explained about the research. Holton (2009) suggested that younger people are more cosmopolitan in comparison to their parents and grandparents. Similarly, people with higher education tend to be more cosmopolitan. Considering the significance of this target group, it is stimulating to explain how young elite education Pakistani men make sense of cosmopolitanism. In the next paragraphs, I have given a brief overview of different social classes in LUMS.

The introduction of the National Outreach Program (NOP) scholarships in 2001 resulted in a wave of change in breaking the monopoly of LUMS as an entirely elite institute. With every passing year, LUMS administration has tried to increase the number of NOP scholarships. This has resulted in an increasingly diverse range of social classes among students in LUMS. According to LUMS database, 1200 NOP scholars have been inducted since 2001, of which 600 have graduated till date[1].

The NOP Scholarship is an internal grant. LUMS receives donations from various sources and then the scholarship committee decides who the grants go to. The selection of students for the scholarship is based primarily on the students' merit and need-based. Some of the students are awarded tuition fees and living expenses, whilst others are granted partial scholarships which cover their tuition fees only. Before the start of NOP scholarships, almost all the students in LUMS were either from upper or upper-middle class. NOP scholars not only bring diversity to LUMS in terms of social classes but also in terms of their different regional backgrounds, ways of living and religious affiliations. However, LUMS is still predominantly an elite institute as around 81 percent of its students are self-funded.

Class difference between NOP students and other LUMS students is a significant factor in shaping relationships between NOP students and other LUMS students. NOP students are from middle or lower-middle class while most of the LUMS students who are self-funded are either from upper or upper-middle class. Few of the NOP students shared different experiences regarding their class difference with wealthy students. Some of the participants reported that they felt proud that although they are from humble backgrounds, theycan make it to LUMS on scholarships. While for few of the NOP students the experience of coming to LUMS was disturbing as they initially felt uncomfortable in adjusting to LUMS elite environment. Out of those few some settled down and adjusted to LUMS culture while others still could not connect to the environment and felt alienated.

The biggest restrain for a NOP scholar to adjust in LUMS elitist culture, according to one of my informants, is money. Because if one wants to be a part of elite class then he/she must spend money on birthday parties, gifts, and day-to-day expenses. Those who want to be a part of the elite circle they must change their appearance and wear branded clothes, shoes, glasses etc. Calhoun (2003) argues that nothing is more cosmopolitan than money. Money is required for a global outlook and NOP scholars do not have enough money to spend on these luxuries. This signifies the desire to be a part of elite culture in LUMS and pressures faced by middle-class Pakistani teenagers in an elite institute like LUMS.

Speaking in English is also a problem faced by NOP students when they get admission in LUMS. English language is part of LUMS culture; I have often observed students talking to each other in English. Even if they are talking in Urdu language, they will use many phrases of English language. Most of the students like to listen English music, watch English movies and read English novels and they discuss movies and music with their friends in English language. For a NOP scholar, this culture is new, and it takes them time to adapt to this new culture.

The problem of speaking in English is also related to Pakistani educational system as in most of the Pakistani private schools, English is the language of instruction and communication while in public sector schools the language of instruction and communication is Urdu. Due to this, most of the NOP students are not fluent in English and they are reluctant to participate in class. Although, the LUMS language of instruction is English, but students communicate in Urdu if they want to. Since, most of the rich students, who have private schooling background, mostly communicate in class and outside class in English. So,

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[1] https://nop.lums.edu.pk/

some of the NOP students feel a little reluctant to communicate in Urdu at least in classroom, though outside classroomthey spoke Urdu. It shouldn't be implied that NOP students do not have knowledge of English language or that they have never been exposed to English language, it is more a matter of practice and fluency. Some of the NOP scholars have good command on English while others are hesitant initially and then with the passage of time they start performing well.

III. PAKISTAN'S EUROPE

'LUMS is Pakistan's Europe' or 'LUMS is a mini-America in Pakistan' are some of the phrases that I heard during informal discussions with informants as they were discussing the modern and elite culture of LUMS. It is not surprising that they would associate LUMS to Europe or America especially when Europe and America are signifiers of progressive, modern and affluent nations. Many scholars (Appiah, 2006; Baban, 2006; Beck, 2005, 2006 & 2009; Calhoun 2007, 2007b & 2010; Edwards 2008; Pichler 2008; Todd 2007 &Werbner 2008) have argued that cosmopolitanism is Euro-American. This view applies to the construction of cosmopolitanism in Pakistan, which is largely western and Eurocentric.

It is not only elitism of LUMS that people consider it as Pakistan's Europe, some other values of pluralism and tolerance are also highly valued in LUMS. However, there are some important values that run through the elite culture of LUMS. They are (1) to be liberal, progressive and appreciative of diversity, (2) to proclaim tolerance based on liberal humanist values and (3) to dismiss religion as orthodoxy are some of the core values. In order to be part of this elite group, students must follow and adhere to such values. Some scholars also described instances when they were mocked by the elite students on the basis of their socio-economic backgrounds. Daniyal[2], who was doing bachelor's in law on NOP scholarship, stated:

Daniyal: There are dominant views which are from the elite class. If someone is bringing in views from another community those are not accepted and are not given much importance. Elite students apparently seem to be very tolerant and open-minded, but they start judging you on the basis of your background. They have been brought up in a system; they think what we are brought up in, what our parents have taught us, that is the truth.

Advocating human rights, being tolerant and open-minded and not discussing religion are some of the aspects of LUMS that makes it "Pakistan's Europe". According to Daniyal, in LUMS only elitist ideologies are valued and these are more or less parallel to conceptions of western modernity. If someone from a non-elite class tries to bring in their views, they are considered backward. The idea of tolerance, propagated by LUMS elite students stands in sharp contrast to Werbner's (2006) vernacular cosmopolitan conception of tolerance, which is non-western form of cosmopolitan ethics. The question of power which is addressed by my informant in the above discussion has also been suggested by 'cosmopolitan sentiments might be expressed through a hierarchically ordered set of cultural practices, some having depth and effect in terms of cosmopolitanism, others not.' (Woodward &Skrbis 2012: 130). This discussion highlights the inherent complexities involved in adopting various global values such as tolerance, open-mindedness, humanity and equality. On one hand, the values of cosmopolitan culture like understanding and accepting cultural differences, being tolerant and giving people their due space has become a fashion symbol and therefore, many people follow these values. On the other hand, the difference between 'us' and 'them' remains there because many people accept these values for the sake of fashion and consider their views and understanding of the world as absolute truths.

IV. BEING COSMOPOLITAN

Calhoun (2010) argues that, though an effort is made to include consideration of poor, developing or emerging economies, cosmopolitan theories reflect the perspective of the rich. The perspective of the rich, it has been analysed in my research, is not all-inclusive as the sense of cosmopolitanism retains in it. It also disallows certain cultural patterns and behaviours. This perspective is more tilted towards westernization and consumption of elite culture that love to eat on the western food chains instead of local hotels and food places. Food habits are just one major example of the consumption of cosmopolitanism in Pakistan. Pakistani cosmopolitanism is elite-driven and influences and encompasses all aspects of human existences as has been observed during anthropological fieldwork at LUMS. Drawing insight from Calhoun's argument in this paper I explore the perspective of the middle-class students in LUMS on cosmopolitanism. NOP scholars in LUMS represent Pakistani middle class.

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[2]Name of a male student.

Despite other factors of internal cosmopolitanism in LUMS like foreign students on exchange programs, varieties of music, food and culture, a special event called 'color week' is organized for senior students, so that they have enjoyable memories of their time at LUMS. During color week, they have different days with a certain theme and senior students dress up in accordance to the theme of a particular day. I will focus here on two days *Paindoo* day and Yo-day. *Paindoo* is a colloquial term for a villager or one who doesn't know much about city life. On *Paindoo* day, all students who were graduating that year used to dress up like villagers and interact with each other in their ethnic languages such as Punjabi, Siraiki, Pashtun, Sindhi, Balochi etc. Yo is a term used for modern people, who dress up in shorts, jeans, tees, eat burgers, and talk in English etc. On *Paindoo* day, a *dhol* group is arranged and students do Punjabi folk dance called bhangra; whereas, on Yo-day club atmosphere is created using laser and disco lighting effects and students dance on English songs.

Figure 1: Students celebrating *Paindoo*-day (Source: First Author's own photograph)

Figure 2: Students celebrating Yo-Day (Source: Author's own photograph)

I asked Shahid, one of the administrative staff members, 'what is the purpose of these days?' and 'what terms like Paindoo, Yo imply'? His response was that 'we just want our students to have a good time and enjoy their last few days in LUMS. These days are for entertainment and not meant to insult anyone'. However, I suggest that these days are symbolic of cosmopolitanism in LUMS, when students mock and at the same time internalize both local and foreign cultures. Beck (2006, p. 150-151) argues that "Cosmopolitanism has itself become a commodity: the glitter of cultural difference fetches a good price. Images of an in-between world, of the black body, exotic beauty, exotic music, and exotic food and so on, are globally cannibalized, re-staged and consumed as products for mass markets." The commodification of cosmopolitanism makes it essentially a classed phenomenon, which is contested in this paper. I argue that cosmopolitanism is not limited to global consumers, its local implication and interaction within various localities should be taken into account. Now I discuss cosmopolitanism using examples of international food chains and English language usage in LUMS.

V. CONSUMING COSMOPOLITANISM

This research has explored that cosmopolitanism is not consumed in the strict sense of allowing the differences and living amicably with these for the rest of the lives. The consumption of Pakistani cosmopolitanism is in fact consuming Pakistani indigenous culture and is trending towards globalization trying to maintain one view of life in this world. Reflecting on the example of food, Beck (2003, p. 37) explains:

If we are what we eat, none of us is national anymore ... We are now all used to finding foodstuffs that used to be separated by continents and cultures freely available side-by-side as mass market commodities. This selection ... is the basic ingredient of a culinary cosmopolitanism. ... World society is in some ways baking in the oven and broiling in the pan.

One of the informants Haider[3], talked about the symbolic significance of International Food Chains in LUMS as:

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[3]Name of a male student.

Fast food chains such as McDonalds, Pizza Hut and KFC opened in Pakistan. People go there not just because they like McDonald but because they want to be modern. They think going to McDonald is something modern.

Watson's (as qtd in Inglehart& Baker) argues that "the seemingly identical McDonald's restaurants that have spread throughout the world actually have different social meanings and fulfil different social functions in different cultural zones" (2001, p. 16). In Pakistan, International food chains are meant for upper-middle or upper-class people whereas; in western countries these chains are mostly for the working-class people. Eating out on international food outlets is considered as a status symbol in Pakistan and only middle, upper-middle and upper-class people can afford it.

Figure 3: Informants at Gloria Jeans, LUMS Branch (Source: First Author's own photography)

During ethnographicfieldwork to LUMS, it was noticed that many rich students did not eat at PDC (Pepsi Dining Centre), which had economical rates. Rather, most of them used to go to Tia Maria, *Zakir Tikka*, Pizza Hut, Gloria Jeans, and other famous and expensive food outlets available on campus. As a matter of fact, one of the informants asked us if the first author has ever been to PDC. She told him that she often bought food from PDC. He mentioned that 'I don't know how you tolerate food from PDC'. This comment shows not only his dislike for PDC food but also his adherence to elitism prevalent in LUMS. Hence, it is the development of an image and food place to such an exalted level it becomes the desire of everyone, and all do not want to associate themselves with that as is the case with PDC. Affordability for the middle-class student and satisfaction of having the indigenous culture are not the variables that are influencing this robust and outburst desire of the students. Rather they want to amalgamate themselves with this concept of westernization and following the flow of the elites. Thus, it is not a form of cosmopolitanism in the true sense. This also signifies that the cultural move at elite institutions in Pakistan is unidirectional disallowing the differences to settle down coherently in a single society.

VI. ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Even the way English is spoken, and its pronunciation is a matter of concern among all the students in almost all institutions of Pakistan especially the elite ones. This phenomenon is also very much common in the postcolonial societies, those that have undergone the cultural and linguistic treatment by the English. A certain kind of resentment is shown in the elite institutions of Pakistan towards Pakistani culture and language i.e., Urdu. This is also what happened with Talha over there at LUMS. English language is a very important marker to understand and judge how cosmopolitanism is working in Pakistan which seems more like globalizations where differences are not acceptable for the elite especially the ones that are in clash with the westernized version of the culture. Talha, who is an NOP scholar, discussed with us his struggle and attitude of rich students towards him in the following words:

Some people in the elite class, they laugh at you, the way you are talking, the way you dress up... this is a sad aspect of LUMS. When I came here, I never read English novels, but I was good with Urdu poetry and novels and I was very proud of it at that time. I never spoke in English because at that time there was no opportunity to basically talk in English. When I came here, they asked do you read novels, I said yes, which novel? Bano Qudsiya and people laughed. People were talking about Sydney Sheldon, John Gracia and such stuff, but the thing was that I have to prove myself that I am an NOP scholar. So, I went to a bookshop and bought a novel The Da Vinci Code. You know, for 1st four days, I was stuck on page 1 and I was consulting a dictionary. Then I started with Cinderella stories and Aladdin stories... I worked hard on the novels and then I bought a novel and finished it in one night. Bought a movie and watched it. I used to spend two hours in front of the mirror talking in English to myself so that I could speak to others.

The division of Pakistani educational system into English medium and Urdu medium schools gave English language a classed identity. English became a constructor of the modern, Westernized, secular identity in South Asia. By English, I do not only mean speaking English language, but also having a good knowledge of English movies, books and music is part of the package, which gradually results in acculturation of the western value system. It became a class marker and the basis of a new kind of social division and polarization in society. During colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent, English language had been a mark of demarcation between the colonial masters and the natives, whereas, in the post-colonial states English serves to distinguish between the modern/western elites and the middle-class people of Pakistan.

VII. DEVOTED COSMOPOLITANS: ESTRANGED PAKISTANIS

There were devoted young elite cosmopolitans at LUMS who were estranged from their own culture and cultural realities owing to the conflict that had arisen in them by living in the elite institution and non-elite background. The example of Ahmad who was a NOP scholar is quite obvious who talked about rich students in LUMS:

Firstly, they try to copy everything western and secondly, they are disdainful of what the indigenous culture is all about. People from villages are given derogatory names like '*paindoo*' and if anybody does something wrong, they say '*pind se aya hay*'...

Similarly, Rashid commented:

They don't know anything about Pakistani issues, they don't know about Pakistani languages, they never talk in Urdu, they never talk about Pakistani music, they hate it, and they never talk about Pakistani dramas and Pakistani poets.

Although cosmopolitanism is often regarded as an elitist phenomenon, we suggest that in Pakistan most of the upper-class people are just the consumers of cosmopolitanism. Their aspiration 'to become global citizens of the world' leads them not only to estrangement but sometimes aversion towards their own culture and values. The estrangement of my informants towards Pakistani literature, language and music resonates with Sadana's participant Dayal who was sent to English medium school and described his household as 'good civilized Victorian Indian home'. Regarding his Englishness he stated, '... you don't know either culture very well, that it always surfaces, a mannerism, but that's not really true' (2012, p. 59), which Sadana views as cultural duality and hybridity. This research puts forward that NOP scholars are not just consumers but also have a fair understanding of what it entails 'to be cosmopolitan'. They are receptive and at the same time have an analytical approach towards global ideas, thoughts, cultures, and values.

Sometimes blindly following a dominant culture leads to dislike of one's own culture. Many Pakistanis aspire to be modern sometimes at the cost of their own cultural identity. For example, sadly nowadays some of the educated parents do not interact with their children in their ethnic language like Sindhi, Panjabi, and Balochi etc. Rather they talk to their children either in Urdu or English so that their children acquire Urdu as their first and English as their second language, which will eventually result in the death of ethnic languages and cultures in Pakistani society.

Merely by consuming cosmopolitanism without understanding its implications and leaving behind their own culture most of the upper-class people in Pakistan are heading towards universalism. Universalism is

insufficient to describe the human situation because it neglects and devalues the particular. Besides, it ignores the dignity of difference. Each language, culture, group has its specificity, its history of differences and its different history (Beck &Sznaider, 2011). This paper has put forwarded the argument that cosmopolitanism in Pakistan has both cultural and political implications. The cultural implications are obvious from the consumption practices and avid significance to English language. Both these cultural factors have political implications as they refer to class politics which has been contested in this study. I contend that middle class Pakistanis are redefining cosmopolitanism's steadfast relationship with the elite class by not only embracing other cultures but also showing a sense of mastery by amalgamating cosmopolitan practices and values with their respective cultural values. This in turn has given a novel cultural and political interpretation of cosmopolitanism in Pakistan.

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