



## A Kalieodoscopic View of Cultural Lag And Society

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### ABSTRACT

The main thrust of this research paper is to explore the problems of cultural lag as a social issue and concern by focusing on social problems, conflicts, adjustments and maladjustments caused by new technologies. The study is based on secondary sources of data such as books, journal articles, web sites, etc. A considerable amount of observations are also made to consolidate the problems involved with cultural lag. The data is analyzed from postmodern perspective.

The main objectives of this study are – to know the various issues revolve around the notion of cultural lag; to examine the conflicts, social problems, adjustments and maladjustments made by population due to technological advancements; to explore some of the pertinent issues and concerns faced by Gujarat society at large; and finally to explain with some examples the issue of adjustment i.e. to reduce the gap and maladjustment i.e. to unable to reduce the gap.

The concept of 'cultural lag' has become a favorite one with sociologists after it was explicitly formulated by W.F. Ogburn in his treaties entitled "Social Change". Cultural lag is creating problems to Gujarat society in a multitude of ways. The issue of cultural lag tends to permeate any discussion in which the implementation of some new technology is a topic. New technologies have raised serious moral and ethical dilemmas especially in relationships, medicine, social solidarity etc. for individuals as well as for state.

### KEYWORDS

Cultural Lag, Material Culture, Non-material Culture, Adjustments & Maladjustments

### INTRODUCTION

The term cultural lag refers to the notion that culture takes time to catch up with technological innovations and it causes social problems and conflicts. Cultural lag does not only apply to this idea, but also relates to theory and explanation. It helps by identifying and explaining social problems and also to predict future problems. As explained by James W. Woodward (1934), when the material conditions change, changes are occasioned in the adaptive culture, but these changes in the adaptive culture do not synchronize exactly with the change in the material culture, this delay is the culture lag. The term was coined by sociologist William F. Ogburn (1966). His theory of cultural lag suggests that a period of maladjustment occurs when the non-material culture is struggling to adapt to new material conditions (1957).

According to Ogburn, cultural lag is a common societal phenomenon due to the tendency of material culture to evolve and change rapidly and voluminously while non-material culture tends to resist change and remain fixed for a far longer period of time. Due to the opposing nature of these two aspects of culture, adaptation of new technology becomes rather difficult. This distinction between material and non-material culture is also a contribution of Ogburn. Cultural lag creates problems for a society in a multitude of ways. Cultural lag is seen as a critical ethical issue because failure to develop broad social consensus on appropriate applications of modern technology may lead to breakdowns in social solidarity and the rise of social conflict. The term "cultural lag" refers to the fact that culture takes time to catch up with technological innovations, resulting in social problems.

#### Material culture:

In the social sciences, material culture is a term, developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, that refers to the relationship between artifacts and social relations. It includes all physical objects that people create and give meaning. It includes things which are tangible, visible, seen or touched like goods, tools, utensils, furniture, machine etc.

#### Non-material culture:

In contrast to material culture, non-material culture does not include any physical objects or artifacts. Examples of non-ma-

terial culture include any ideas, beliefs, values, and norms that may help shape our society. It consists of thoughts and behaviour that people learn as part of the culture they live in. It includes things which cannot be tangible such as politics, economies, language, family, religion, beliefs, values, rituals, knowledge, skill, talent, government, education etc.

Cultural lag can occur when technological **innovation** outpaces cultural adaptation. For example, when cars were first invented, there were not yet any laws to govern driving, no speed limits, no guidelines for who had the right of way at intersections, no lane markers, no stop signs etc. Its result was chaos. City streets became incredibly dangerous. Laws soon were written to address this problem, closing the gap. The term **cultural lag** is used to describe the situation in which technological advancements or changes in society occur faster than the changes in the rules and norms of the culture that go along with those advancements or changes. This can lead to moral and ethical dilemmas for individuals as the new social norms are developed.

There have been many attempts to relate and integrate the social into economic and vice versa. The conception and theory of cultural lag is well suited to a blending of the social and the economic. Whereas an analysis of the need for institutional adjustment is outside the paradigmatic boundaries of mainstream economic analysis, institutional adjustment is central to the concept of theory of cultural lag. In their attempts to integrate the social and the economic in a holistic framework, both Thorstein Veblen as an economist, and William F. Ogburn as a sociologist, utilized the conception of cultural lag in their theories related to the dynamics of culture evolution. Whereas Veblen analyzed the processes of economic evolution in the framework of cultural evolution, Ogburn analyzed social evolution in the context of cultural evolution. Consequently, cultural lag does not pertain simply to conception alone, but relates to theory and explanation as well. As concept and theory, cultural lag helps to identify, analyze and explain social problems as well as predict and anticipate future problems.

#### AIM & FOCUS:

The main thrust of this research paper is to explore the problems of cultural lag as a social issue and concern by focusing

on social problems, conflicts, adjustments and maladjustments caused by new technologies.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on secondary sources of data such as books, journal articles, web sites etc. A considerable amount of observations are also made to consolidate the findings involved in cultural lag. The data is analyzed from postmodern perspective. Postmodernism is a late-20th-century movement in the arts, architecture, and criticism and it articulates that the world is in a state of perpetual incompleteness and permanent unresolved. Postmodernism promotes the notion of **radical pluralism**; that there are many ways of knowing, and many truths to a fact. Postmodernism includes skeptical interpretations of culture, literature, art, philosophy, history, economics, architecture, fiction and literary criticism.

#### OBJECTIVES:

- The main objectives of this study are –
- To know the various issues revolve around the notion of cultural lag
- To examine the conflicts, social problems, ethical issues, adjustments and maladjustments made by population due to technological advancements
- To explain, with some examples, the issue of adjustment i.e. to reduce the gap and maladjustment i.e. to unable to reduce the gap

#### DATA ANALYSIS & MAJOR FINDINGS:

**The various issues revolve around the notion of cultural lag**

Every technological invention, innovation, new industrial civilization or new factor disturbs an old adjustment. The disturbance created by mechanism was so great that it seemed to be enemy of culture. The wealth-bringing machine brought also ugliness, shoddiness, haste, standardization etc. It brought new hazards, new diseases and industrial fatigue. Technology – invention, innovation, discoveries are great agents of social change. When the scientific knowledge is applied to the problems of life, it becomes technology. In order to satisfy his desires, to fulfill his needs and to make his life more comfortable, man builds civilization. Some speak of a "Looming Space Age", "Information Age", "Electronic Era" or "Global Village". Technology is fast growing. Every technological advance makes it possible for us to attain certain results with less effort, at less cost and at less time. It also provides new opportunities and establishes new conditions of life. The social effects of technology are far-reaching. In the words of Ogburn – "Technology changes society by changing our environment to which we in turn adapt. This change is usually in the material environment and the adjustment that we make with these changes often modifies our customs and social institutions. The pace of technological development is very fast. The technological revolution enabled human kind to shift from hunting & gathering to sedentary agriculture and later to develop civilizations.

**Technological changes have influenced and affected human population socially and culturally. A single invention may have innumerable social effects.**

Inventions like radio, cars, camera, aero plane, various electronic devices, nuclear power plant etc. have influenced and affected our entertainment, education, politics, sports, literature, knowledge, business, occupation, our modes of organization, conflicts etc. Technological revolution in medicine, health, agriculture resulted in the increase of population. Rise of commerce and trade gave birth to the populous towns and cities. Technological changes have influenced attitudes, beliefs, and traditions. The factory system, industrialization, urbanization, the rise of working class, fast transport, communication etc. have to some extent lessened old prejudices, dispelled superstitions, weakened casteism and have given rise to the class based society. Development in transport and communication has changed the outlook of the people. Railways in India have played tremendous role in bringing about social mixing of the people. Movement of people from East to west and

North to south has broken social and regional barriers. If we look at these positive changes, technology can be considered as bliss. It has made living worthwhile for the conveniences and comforts it provides, and has created numerous vocations, trades and professions.

**But one can also look at the technological changes and their negative social consequences on human populations.**

Values play a major role in acceptance or rejection of any change. In our country some communities do not approve of the use of contraceptive as they believe that it goes against their religious values as well as economic values of having large family. Medical technology is being used to keep people's bodies functioning long after they would otherwise have been dead. This raises cultural questions about when life ends, who has the right to end artificial life support, etc. The development of new cultural beliefs, values and norms lags behind the dilemmas posed by the technological change. Technology has radically changed the family organization and every part of family life. Due to technology marriage has lost its sanctity. It is now regarded as civil contract rather than a religious sacrament. Instances of divorce, desertion, separation and broken families are increasing.

**Some men and women use modern technology but they continue to practice traditional attire, language, beliefs, attitudes in their socio-cultural life.**

Women and men ride two wheelers in their traditional dress even though it causes inconvenience. Educated and economically well off people from advanced industrialized society follow certain superstitions. Those who are greatly benefited from medical and technological advancements still continue to possess some strong age old beliefs.

#### CONCLUSIONS:

Cultural lag creates problems for a society in a multitude of ways where new technologies are considered. The advancement of new technologies/ material culture are not only improving our life style but also raising serious ethical issues. For instance, the advancement in Medical research is not only given rise to many new, potentially beneficial medical technologies but also caused innumerable social problems and ethical issues. The lagging of non-material culture is not only dragging us backwards but also protecting our rich culture. We make adjustments when they are economically, educationally, politically beneficial. We make maladjustment when they are not concerned with any benefits in materialistic terms.

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