

Globalisation: Social transformation and NCR Experience

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Abstract: Things are experiencing a change owing to intensive shift in global scene. The local has been overexposed to the global. This 'glocalization' has affected a major shift in attitude towards the conventional values in educated youth. No doubt, it has also left numerous locals confused about how to respond. Modern economy has left a sizable population in the northern India 'rich and confused'. One and a half century ago, Marx said that capitalism not only produces the object for the subject but it also produces subjects for the object. In today's world of advertisement this is what is actually being done. You are creating human beings who are capable of consuming certain products. The emphasis is no longer on creating the products that are required by the human beings rather creating human beings that are required for the products. This is the new culture. People are being altered to fit the image of the products. This new trend of culture is creating its own atmosphere which, in turn, is affecting every aspect of our life and society. But when we talk of culture, we risk entering a difficult zone. Culture is a social force which is evident where it is significant. Cultures can flow, change, intermingle, cut across and through one another, regardless of national frontiers, and have blurred boundaries. Let us consider the scene in outer Delhi and NCR, the area surrounding Delhi. Blinding development of housing estates with world class luxury, commercial plazas with teeming bars have utterly confused the once poor, hardworking and simple hearted village folk. This heavily reworked local youth feels liberated, inferior and hostile all at the same time.

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One and a half century ago, Marx said that capitalism not only produces the object for the subject but it also produces subjects for the object. In today's world of advertisement this is what is actually being done. You are creating human beings who are capable of consuming certain products. The emphasis is no longer on creating the products that are required by the human beings rather creating human beings that are required for the products. This is the new culture. People are being altered to fit the image of the products. This new trend of culture is creating its own atmosphere which, in turn, is affecting every aspect of our life and society. This also refers to the global interconnectedness, which is termed as globalization. Anthony Giddens defines globalization as 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and

vice versa.' David Held defines it as 'the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life, from the cultural to the Criminal, the financial to the spiritual.' This interconnection is multi-aspect and can be viewed from many angles – economic, social, cultural, armament, political, environmental etc. The most powerful and influential mode of international connectivity is economic. The more powerful a country's economic base, the more influential is its culture. Cultural globalization is not a new phenomenon. It has happened in all the ages with ever increasing passion and intensity. Of late, the intensity of this cultural interconnectedness has risen enormously owing to the growth of mass media and technology. Today's world is the result of crosscutting of interdisciplinary relationships across the globe. The global connectivity opens up new avenues of understanding between cultures. But when we talk of culture, we risk entering a difficult zone. Culture is a social force which is evident where it is significant. Society is complex, with characteristics which are difficult to pin down. Cultures can flow, change, intermingle, cut across and through one another, regardless of national frontiers, and have blurred boundaries. Sociocultural aspect of globalization is generally viewed as one way flow of patterns (ideological, behavioural and cultural) from west to East – precisely, it is seen as 'flowing down' from the USA to Eastern countries. This representation of the identity of the USA is also termed as Americanization, Westernization, Modernization, McDonalldization etc.

“McDonalldization is the process of global homogenization of culture through five basic principles: efficiency, calculability, control, the substitution of nonhuman for human technology, and the irrationality of rationality.” (Samir Dasgupta and Ray Kiely: 2008) Supporters of this view of globalization explain this phenomenon as exposing of the local cultures to the new alternatives of living – to the new ideas about personal space, self, individuality, identity, governance, economics, health, beauty and what not! Life is understood in terms of plans, packages and bits – life insurance, health insurance, retirement plans, tour packages, compensation packages, tariff plans and many more. All these plans have provisions for customization or modification to the individual's needs and interests. When such ideological addressers hail us from all the sides, they have a definite influence on our cognitive world – the result is that even people tend to understand the institution of marriage too in terms of a package which can be customized to the needs of individual likes and dislikes. Today, the idea of marriage and the nature of marital relationship seems to be suspending between cultural conventions and individual conveniences. With times the social dynamics are changing – mainly because of changing equation in family economy. The last three decades have witnessed the economic aspects of power struggle in Indian society.

Globalisation is a socioeconomic concept, which considers economic system based on private property and competition is the most efficient, and the democracy is the best political model in the world. The term 'Globalization' has two parts – 'Global' and 'ization'. The first part implies a single system of connection, and the second part means 'to be' or 'make' or 'make alike' – by implication, it is the phenomenon that operates at and connects all the places at a given time. It produces both cultural fragmentation and homogenization in a connected system. Hegemony is the form of ideology in which the values and interests of the hegemonic group are experienced by the other group as already their own. Increasing cases of divorce in India and rising popularity of 'Yoga' and 'Ayurved' in US best exemplifies Giddens' idea of Globalization – distant localities reshaping/affecting each other. An Indian columnist and novelist Shobha Dé's views about marital relationship pose a clear threat to the hegemonic group of 'male-order'. It is not just divorce; it is the attitude of the individuals towards divorce that matters. This new attitude provides them a considerable degree of 'agency' which is supposed to enable them to fashion their individualities with the freedom as never before – though the nature of the 'freedom', 'agency' and 'individuality' is quite a matter of debate in the society like ours. Shobha Dé talks about the emergent thoughts, values and social structures, and the resultant individual identities that are based on the consumption of the items picked from the global cultural supermarket. We read into and weave stories around these global (American) items (and these stories are not simply unrealistic). The notions of individual identity, space and freedom are now an essential part of our educated upper class psyche. And, not quite surprisingly, the 'alarm reaction' of our society to these new attitudes is getting milder everyday as the meanings of objects and practices are created and recreated continuously. Even a cursory look at the life in metros will testify it. The picking up of these new attitudes from the cultural supermarket may be seen as cultural capital, which raises one's social credit on the rating scale of our 'modern' society. In *Shooting from the Hip* (1994: 172) Shobha De, an Indian writer asserts – “with some amount of economic freedom, women have changed the basic rules somewhat. If a self-sufficient woman with a roof over her chooses to marry, it is because she wants to share her life with someone in the fullest sense, not because she is looking for a lifelong meal ticket. Divorce, too, has got to be viewed in this light. A woman of independent means is not compelled to perpetuate a bad marriage because she has nowhere else to go”.

Things are experiencing a change owing to intensive shift in global scene. The local has been overexposed to the global – thanks to cable T.V., Cell-phone, Internet and affordable technology of D.V.D., and, of course, piracy which makes the information available at cheaper cost. This 'glocalization' – the interpenetration of the global and the local – has affected a major shift in attitude towards the conventional values in

educated youth. There are some curious news items doing rounds globally – “Actress Sofia Vergara(40), mother of a son(Monalo, 19), wants to freeze her eggs so that she can have children with boyfriend Nick Loeb at some point in the future.”(Delhi Times, Mar 16, 2012) “Megan Fox comments tongue-in-cheek about living in a world where losing your phone is more dramatic than losing your virginity. Our phones are storehouses of our dirty laundry – web browsing history, photos, SMSs and, what not? A survey by Confident Technologies Inc indicates that 97% of the respondents have email application running on their mobiles. According to the latest survey by security software company Symantec, the first thing a stranger would do is attempt to access your personal apps, then your photos and then your banking details.”(DT: Mar 16, 2012) No doubt, it has also left numerous locals confused about how to respond. Modern economy has left a sizable population in the northern India 'rich and confused'. “A growing band of nouveau riche with an urge to splurge on luxury lifestyle is forcing retailers to redefine marketing in the country by getting staff to converse with customers in local dialect with homely etiquettes. Priya Sachdev Chatwal, Chief Operating Officer and Creative director of TSG International Marketing says – Luxury cannot afford to intimidate.”The Economic Times: Mar 15, 2012.

Let us consider the scene in outer Delhi and NCR, the area surrounding Delhi. The rapid growth in economy, mainly due to acquisition/selling of land at exorbitant prices, in the adjoining areas of Haryana and UP has left the people 'rich and confused'. Blinding development of housing estates with world class luxury, commercial plazas with teeming bars have utterly confused the once poor, hardworking and simple hearted village folk. This heavily reworked local youth feels liberated, inferior and hostile all at the same time. Two opposing factors are working there simultaneously – development and resentment. Take Gurgaon as a case, 1990s onwards, one part is teeming with development and is dancing on tune global economy, and the other one houses the rural locals soaking in big money without matching education and worldview. The conservative social attitudes make themselves visible in mandatory *parda* clad women and *khap* brand male mentality. The farmer turned neo-rich folk, in majority, are surviving on rent income, transport/cab business, utility shops etc. Several low (or almost no) educated people enjoy their life basking in money and doing practically nothing. Participants of the global economy look to them as 'others', giving them inferiority. The recent gang rapes in the area are the result of these two attitudes that are suddenly forced to operate side by side. It's not the shift, but the suddenness and speed of the shift that has confused people off their once simple, comfortable but firm ground. The transition brought about by what we see as global economic phenomenon manifest itself in the increasing number of property related court cases, rising level of animosity within and among families, ambition to consume the top

brands (goods as well as ideas) without matching income and disposition, and extreme behavior of slavish acceptance of western cultural artifacts on the one hand and regression into local cultural cocoon on the other. This confusion and mismatch between self-image and reality, which is the socio-cultural consequence of globalization, can be confronted with efficient and sincere policies, a mature approach on the part of the society, proper education and, of course, a little patience.

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