

## **IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION ON CHILDHOOD: A CASE STUDY OF THE CHILDREN OF A SUBURBAN AREA**

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### **Abstract**

We are now in the era of globalisation. At present, Globalisation is a burning issue. It has spread out every corner of the world, every parts of our regular life. Though scholars have said that globalisation is an ancient phenomenon and it also prevailed at the time of earliest civilisations. Famous scholar Thomas L.Friedman divided this process into three parts: globalisation of countries, globalisation of companies, and globalisation of individuals. This century covers the third part –“globalisation of individuals”. After introducing with television, computer, internet; Indian society has changed rapidly. This change has been indulged by the Indian government through their foreign policies. A lot was documented by earlier scholars about the impact of globalisation on the Indian society and culture. There is no doubt that youth and adult are the main carrier of this process but children-as a passive agent has also been affected by this. Globalisation has changed their lifestyle, food habits, dressing sense, recreation medium, and consumer approach. This scenario is very common in urban and suburban India. Globalisation has totally changed the meaning of childhood. Children have become more advanced and technologically sound with the help of this process. Besides this, Children are moving far away from their culture and tradition as a result of this process. Main aim of this paper is to understand the impact of globalisation on the children and also find out the source of

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this influence. Data were collected from twenty children (5-14 years old) of a selected ward of Madhyamgram Municipality. Data were collected using purposive sampling method. Then data were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Through this research, it has been found that food habit, dress and consumer approach of children are mainly affected by globalisation process. Occupational structure of family members, peer group, perception of parents about social status, regulation of schools, and mass media, urbanisation and commercialisation of local market are the main source of this influence.

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## **1. Introduction**

We are now in the era of globalisation. India has started to experience this Phenomena when the Indian market was opened to the world through the implementation of 1991 Industrial Policy, After this incident, every corner of our country start to utter the slogan “liberalisation, globalisation, privatisation”. Through mass media it reached almost every single house of urban and suburban household and spread out the message of cultural globalisation. There is no doubt that globalization mainly effected the youth of our country as they were directly connected to the nodal centre of the globalization process through their economic, academic and cultural activities but the scenario has been changed in recent time. As urbanism has become a way of life, children have also become an active adaptor of this process through their food habits, dressing sense, recreational pattern, and consumer behavior. Family, Institutions, Peer groups, mass media and also the present production system have played a vital role in this matter. Globalization is a term that tries to capture the rapid social change that is occurring simultaneously across a number of dimensions, including the economy, politics communications and culture (Longhurst, Brian et.al 2008)...Where cultural life can no longer be seen as firmly located in particular places with clear boundaries (ibid). In Indian context, globalization is a recent phenomena which emerged in last two decade. India pursued autonomous economic development with limited global entanglements until the mid 1980s, when Rajiv Gandhi administration began a process of economic liberalization. When the oil price rise associated with 1991 gulf war led to a foreign exchange crisis, the Indian Government accepted

conditions for an IMF loan, reducing restrictions on investment, devaluing the rupee and lifting foreign-exchange controls. Within five years, imports more than doubled, exports more than tripled and foreign capital investment more than quintupled (Shurmer-Smith, 2000). It is evident that globalization has changed from being a seller's market into being a consumer's market. This economic transformation has taken its prominent look when it entered into the life of general public through cultural globalization (Banaji, 2012). Cultural globalization—the transnational movement of media—followed economic liberalization, as cable television offerings suddenly competed with state-run television and Hollywood films competed with local Hindi films. Until 1991, Indian television and film constituted one of the World's most protected media markets but deregulations transformed the media landscape. Fueled by the desires of advertisers to reach the newly open Indian market, the number of television channels grew from one state run channel in 1991 to more than 70 cable channels in 1991. Access to television increased from less than 10% of the urban population in 1990 to nearly 75% by 1999. In 1991, cable television reached 300,000 homes; in 1999, it reached 24 million homes. India remains the world's largest producer of feature films but with the easing of foreign exchange restrictions Hollywood captured 10% of Indian market (Thussu, 2000). Through the mass media, globalization has reached all every part of our life. Louise Overgaard (2010) has mentioned that India is a particularistic, communitarianist, diffuse, outer directed culture that favors ascribed status and has a synchronous perception of time, when looking at the consequences of globalization; it seems to be the case that the deeply rooted traditions and values in India are changing. Family pattern, Religious perception, Caste system has undergone through rapid change. Even the food habit has changed due to globalization. In 1980, consumption of animal and vegetable products increased very substantially. The 1990s, by contrast saw a significant change in the pattern of food consumption. There was a marked increase in the consumption of animal product, especially animal fats, whereas the increase in the consumption of vegetable products was relatively modest. The 1990s were soon associated with the consumption of significantly larger amounts of energy dense foods in the form of fats, oils and starchy roots (Pingali, Khawaja, 2004). Though globalization was failed to change the gender related concept among the elite and non elite Indians (Derne, 2005) & (Banaji, 2012), previous research has shown the positive and negative influence of globalization on Indian education system. Globalization as a whole influenced Indian family pattern, Education system, Diet pattern, Consumer approach, traditional

concept about religion and caste. It is inevitable that non material cultural practice of children has been influenced by globalization but the intensity and reason may differ from one to another. This paper is studied to analyze the impact of globalization on childhood of a suburban area, direct and indirect controlling factors of this process and it will also give a brief picture of changing scenario of childhood lifestyle of pre and post globalization period.

## **2. Research Method**

Madhyamgram was a refugee rehabilitation hub. Most of the residence of Madhyamgram originally belongs to Bangladesh. It is a newly founded municipality area of Barasat sub division of north 24 pgs. It is surrounded by jashohore road, sodepur road and connected with Sealdah through railway. It is at few kilometre distances from Kolkata airport. In ancient time, this area was connected with Kolkata and Bangladesh through a river named labanyabati. After 1950 riots, refugee came to this place at a large number. As jute industrial belt of North 24pgs was totally occupied by earlier migrants, in second phase, migrants came here rapidly. Local people set up relief camp and distributed land among refugee families. It was evident that migrants from a particular area of Bangladesh like Jashore, Khulna, and then Barisal and Faridpur settled down here. Refugee people started new schools, set up roads, and clubs with their own efforts. After 1971 Nakshalbari movement many refugee families escaped from Kolkata and settled down in this area for peace and security. This group carried a different kolkataoriented culture. In that three phase, different neighbourhoods were set up in different parts of madhyamgram. Housewives in this area also took active part in this process. They started mahilasamiti, helped men in organising community activities. I have selected an ancient neighbourhood of Madhyamgram municipality. Bidhanpally (word no 24) is one of the ancient neighborhood of this municipality. It is connected with Madhyamgram rail station and Chowmatha and Newbarrackpore Bus stand by road. Most of the people of this area are involved in tertiary service mainly quaternary economic activities. Most of them are employed at Salt Lake, Park Street, Dalhousie, Barabazar. People of this are mainly Hindu. In recent year a few Bihari and Marwari families has come here to live. Primary Data have been collected from 25 children whose age is in between 5-14 using interview schedules. Data were collected from ten people among whom five persons had spent their childhood before nineties and five persons who had spent their childhood in nineties. Purposive sampling method has been used to collect the

data. **Focus group discussion, non-participant observation, visual techniques, oral narratives** has been used as important methods. Then the data have been analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively and have been presented with help of cartographic techniques

### **3. Results and Analysis**

#### **.3.1.Demographic Characteristics of these children:**

The age of the students ranges from 5 to 14. Majority of them come under the group of 9-11. Children whose age is less than nine years old are less in number. Children of last two groups are the student of secondary school where they share their space with lots of children of their same age and they get a chance to interchange their idea about different things. They have spent a huge time of the day far away from their familiar environment of their houses. In this stage, they are influenced by different formal and non formal social groups and develop their sense about some collective behavior like fashion and fads. These behaviors strongly influence their livelihood pattern. 85% of the children are studied in secondary school and rests of them are in primary school. Very few of them (2%) go to English medium school. From their education level it has been understood that they belong to middle class families and they have shared the educational space with the children of their same economic class. Children of English medium school read in the lower primary section. : 55% of the children can speak in only Bengali whereas rest of 45% can speak in both Bengali and Hindi language. We all know that language is an important factors of cultural assimilation so their proficiency in regional and international languages help them to adapt others culture. It is very interesting that they are not comfortable in English language. On basis of that it can be said that they have used different global product based on their perception rather knowing the true ingredient of the material and here the mass media and commercial market has played an important role. 75% children live in nuclear families and 5% live in joint families and rest of them live in extended families. Most of the families are consist of 3-4 members. We are aware of the fact that family is the main source of carrying ancestral tradition but here it has been found that very few children are getting chance to get knowledge from their ancestors about their own culture. It should be another cause for the present dominance of western culture in our society. 60% of respondents were female where as 40% of them were male. Among the female respondents 70% girls is less than 10 years old whereas 70% of male respondents is above 10 years old. Economic Condition of the Families:

Most of the families belong to middle economic class groups. Their monthly income ranges between 10000 to 15000 per month. Only 2% families have more than two earning members. Father of 95% children is involved in service sectors and rest 5% involve in business activities.

### **3.2.Parameters for understanding the impact of globalisation process**

To understand the impact of globalisation process, four major and two minor parameters have been taken. Major parameters are 1.Food, 2.Dress, 3.Consumer approach, 4.Recreation pattern and two minor parameters are 1.Religious activity, 2.Gender concept. The first four parameters are related to material cultural practice and last two parameters are related to non material cultural practice. As globalisation has entered into children's livelihood through their cultural activities so the cultural space inside their family, school, and society has played a vital role. Most of the children live in nuclear families where they have very weak connection with their kins and relatives and at present they have not enjoyed the company of their neighbours due to modern urban settings and hectic daily routine. So they are very much influenced by mass behaviour represented in mass media through television, news paper, movies, social networking site.

68% children prefer to wear western dresses. In case of selection of dress, boys and girls are same in opinion. Girls and boys mainly prefer to wear t-shirts and jeans. 2% girls prefer to wear traditional dresses like ghagra and only one boy prefers to wear Punjabi. Their parents mainly prefer those items because a jeans can be worn with any t-shirts and it can last for long time whereas a comfortable Salwar suit cost 800-1000 rs and it can be worn as a set. So options are very limited in case of salwar suit. So the parents have followed the comparative cost advantage theory in this matter. Children are very much influenced by the TV and cartoon character. In all the TV serials (Bengali and Hindi), characters wear western dress and sometimes westernised looks have been represented as an important grooming factor of someone's life (like Jassijaisikoyinehi, Dildostidance, Bojhena se bojhena). All the favourite cartoon character of children like Doremon, Lopita, Ben 10 wear westernised dress. It is very important to note that in religious and family programmes children use to wear sari, salwar and Punjabi it has been seen that present economy and mass culture influence the dressing pattern of the children. Children mainly buy their dresses from shopping malls of Madhyamgram. They mainly wear dresses in

special occasion though for traditional dress they prefer local shop for shopping. As they have tried several dresses in shopping mall before final selection, they prefer shopping mall. In occasions, their family members who are employed in private sectors get free gift coupon and they take the children to the shopping mall for shopping so job profile of family members also play as a key factor in this matter.

For regular important amenities, children use to go local shop. In shopping mall those items cost so much. The important study material of the children has become globalised. In the cover page of exercise books, cartoon characters are picturised nicely. Their pencil box, tiffin box are decorated in same way. Even their dolls have brown hair, brown eyes and white skin which symbolise western racial traits. It can't be justified to blame shopping mall culture for indulging in globalised culture rather the whole production system act as a connecting medium between children and globalization.

Most of the children prefer to play in their free time and girls prefer to play traditional games of India like hide and sick, kumirdanga, kobadi, Kana machi. Boys prefer to play international games like cricket and football. Boys and girls also watch tv channels .Favourite tv channels for the girls are Sangeetbangla, Pogo, Cartoon and boys mainly watch sports channel like Ten sports, Star sports, Sony Pix. No regional cartoon channels, sports channel are available in cable. Some Bengali cartoons are telecast on regional channel on every Sunday in the morning when children are busy in study or extracurricular activities.

Children celebrate Durgapuja, Kalipuja as well as Christmas .Though they have Muslim friends they are not aware of Muslim culture or festival .They have seen the x-mas celebration in TV programmes so they are influenced by it. Some Children receive gift from their parents on Christmas.

99% children prefer their best friend from same sex group. Boys and girls prefer to play different games at different place. Their parents do not give them permission to play with the male friend. Children up to class four have some friends of opposite sex. They are very much influenced by the gender ideology of Indian society. In this matter globalised media is unable to spread the message of gender equality

**3.3 Changing scenario of childhood**

Parameter	Childhood before nineties	Childhood in nineties	Childhood after nineties
Food	Children mainly prefer to eat rice, meat, fish, rice pudding, They carried their Tiffin in paper and the Tiffin was roti and sugar	They prefer to eat rice and fish, meat. They often eat fast food like egg roll, chowmin. They had their Tiffin box but the main food item was roti and curry or suji. They drink health drinks.	They prefer non Bengali foods. In Tiffin; they use to take globalised packaged food.
Dress	Children mainly prefer to wear cotton frock (girls), churidar cotton pants and t-shirts (boys)	They use to prefer wear skirts, jeans, frocks and churidar	They prefer to wear western outfit. In occasion, they wear traditional dresses
Recreation pattern	They liked to play outdoor games like hide-and-sick, Kumirdanga, Burichoo, Kabadi, and boys play football. Boys and girls play together in all the game (except football).	They prefer to play games and mainly outdoor games girls and boys both play cricket and tennis together	They like to play. Girls and boys play separately in different place. They do not get adequate time to play due to hectic schedule.
Consumer approach	They wore those dresses which their parents had bought for them. They carried their books in plastic	They bought their dresses from local shop and Hatibagan.	They prefer shopping at mall. They mainly buy

	and they did not have any concept of pencil box.		dresses from shopping mall.
Gender concept	Boys and girls played together and they had good friendship.	Boys and girls play together and they were good friends. They have good connection till now.	Boys and boys always play separately. They prefer to make friendship with other children of same sex.
Religious activity	They were aware of xmas but they did not celebrate it.	They sent xmas card and new year card to their friends.	They celebrate Durgapuja, Kalipuja as well as xmas. They also celebrate friendship day, Chocolate day with friends.

**Table no 1: Changing scenario of childhood**

Source: Primary Survey

#### 4. Conclusion

It has been found that their dressing style is the main indicator of the influence of globalization process in their life but their dressing style is the result of present economic or production system of our society. So here we have find the eco of Marxist approach of material culture<sup>\*</sup>. In case of food habits, it has been seen that their choice is affected by their family members, daily routine, Peer groups, and regulation of school. This conclusion is the reflection of words of the structural approach of material cultural theory<sup>†</sup>. In case of consumer approach; they are influenced mainly

<sup>\*</sup> In Marxist cultural approaches, it has been said that objects engender a false consciousness with exploited social classes who focus on the lure of commodity jewels, and in doing so overlook their exploited status within capital system.

<sup>†</sup> In structural approach, it has been said that objects are signs referring to something other than themselves. Object is held to be a 'sign' of something else, a proxy for some other social meaning.

by mass media and prefer to buy globalised items. It supports the theory of structural approach In case of religious activities; they are influenced by globalization through mass media and advertisement. It supports the theory of structural approach. Girls are allowed to wear jeans and t-shirts, but they always maintain difference from the boys of same age. It is the result of the fear generated through the news of child molestation in our state so here we find the eco of the theory of “Geography of fear”. Globalisation can’t change our concept gender ideology of the society. If we compare the lifestyle of the children between pre and post globalization and recent time, we can understand the influence of globalization mainly on their dress, food habits and recreation pattern. Globalization has mainly affected our traditional culture. We have to take the globalized Technique but also try to save our ancient resource, our culture. We have to include our ancient cultural practice in our daily life. Children should be given traditional nutritious food items in their daily food chart but in modernized way, parents have to make the food item more attractive by garnishing. In school programmes, students may be asked to wear ethnic dress and parents can encourage them to wear ethnic dresses in family functions also. Cartoon channel in Bengali should be launched where children can see the cartoons in Bengali .In school curriculum, traditional games and sports should be included mandatory and Games period should be included in regular routine. School must provide scholarships for the potential player. In schools, co- education system should be started immediately so that children can learn to deal the children of the opposite sex as friend.

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