

GLOBALIZATION, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE QUEST FOR CULTURAL IDENTITY IN INDIA

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A nation's culture reflects its social progress and collective achievements. India's long history of cultural exchange has enabled diverse faiths and traditions to coexist, forming a unified identity through cooperation. Though global diversity is vast, India remains united in philosophy and lifestyle, with differences shaped largely by political and external influences. Representing justice, freedom, and nonviolence, Indian culture embodies spiritual and social cohesion. Globalization, however, has occasionally challenged this identity. Dynamic rather than monolithic, Indian culture evolves organically within communities. Its resilience and sustained unity affirm its enduring relevance in an ever-changing global landscape.

Introduction

We are in a time when globalization has had a powerful effect on the different aspects of life and quickly moved the world into the 21st century. Globalization has accelerated cross-cultural exchange and economic integration, creating a borderless world market and compelling nations to balance onshore localization with offshore globalization. Global culture evolves through interactions among distant societies, while local culture forms through close community bonds, together producing hybrid identities. As Ezra Suleiman notes in *Nagging Questions on Global Culture*,

globalization fosters both homogeneity and differentiation. India reflects this tension, where traditional values coexist with global influences in a continuous process of cultural negotiation.

Globalization

The Concept Behind –If one is to sum up globalization in the way economic, political, and social parameters are interconnected and integrated with respect to decreasing distances through technological developments, it would be very unfair to as stated by Hawker in his research in the year of 2010. Globalization should therefore be viewed as a unifying force that enhances cultural interaction and communication rather than eroding local values. Advances in technology, social media, and the Internet have accelerated connectivity, while challenges such as cultural erosion, cybercrime, and identity crises persist¹. Schreiter defines globalization as the growing interconnection of global political, economic, and social life, as cited in Islam, 2022¹³. Berger and Huntington stressed its economic and cultural implications, noting its dual role in homogenization and diversification¹⁴. Thus, globalization improves living standards but also exposes native industries to multinational dominance. It remains a trade-off between integration and differentiation,

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functioning as a complex process that simultaneously connects and separates societies².

Cultural Identity Versus Identity:

Identity was considered fundamental before cultural identity, with Erikson (1968) linking it to consistency and continuity, and later scholars highlighting uniqueness¹⁹. Identity appears in both individual and collective forms, shaped through relationships with people and institutions. Multiple identity types—social, psychological, gender-based, and cultural—exist, with cultural identity becoming central in a globalized India. Weinreich's ISA conceptualizes identity as shaped by interactions within sociocultural contexts, drawing from Erikson, Kelly, and Tajfel¹⁹. Cultural studies contrast self-identity with cultural identity, the latter grounded in shared heritage and group affiliations. Hall (1996b) proposed two forms: one emphasizing stable collective continuity and the other viewing identity as a dynamic process of “being” and “becoming”¹⁰. Barth in 1969 introduced boundaries—cultural, psychological, or political—that regulate group inclusion and exclusion, making identity fluid and contingent²². Political, economic, and environmental pressures continually reshape identity expressions. Identity studies have expanded into socio-political movements, including feminist and ethnic mobilizations (Ghosh, 2006), which challenge power structures and reshape social relations⁸. Thus, cultural identity emerges as a dynamic, evolving construct shaped by ongoing interactions within broader historical and cultural environments.

Globalization of Culture

One of the results of globalization that is difficult to be missed is the formation of global cultural order and ambience. Though often seen as dominant, cultural globalization also enables pluralistic exchanges since the mid-1970s⁴.

Western especially Euro-American principles still hold prominence through media and power structures.

The growing movement of people, ideas, and lifestyles strengthens interconnections, yet debates persist over which cultures gain visibility and which remain marginal (Singh, 1998). These concerns relate to cultural identity politics and Western dominance, influencing national and international discourses⁹.

Digital media now offers ways to preserve traditions despite globalization's homogenizing pressures, creating a paradox between cultural uniformity and diversity. Increasing intercultural interactions continue to replace

older narratives of separation.

Cultural globalization involves acculturation, diffusion, and integration¹⁶. With boundaries eroding, culture is no longer confined to local systems. Corporations shape culture more than individuals, making globalization a force that drives integration, hybridization, and redefined identities²⁰.

Globalization and the Crisis of Cultural Identity:

Since the last quarter of the 20th century, globalization has come to accompany a growing crisis of cultural identity. Rapid global and digital changes unsettle earlier stable identity patterns, weakening identity as a fixed basis of personal and collective life¹⁷.

This crisis appears at individual, local, and global levels, shaped by simultaneous homogenization and diversification pressures⁸. New global flows create ethnos capes of migrants, refugees, and tourists¹, enhancing cultural hybridity. Featherstone (1990) views this as a multicultural era marked by attempts to protect symbolic boundaries⁶. Ethnicity and mobilization have thus intensified against globalization's unifying forces¹⁸.

Diasporic dislocation produces nostalgia and alienation, even though digital media helps preserve aspects of native culture (Cultural Globalization and Globalization of Culture, 2006).

Globalization has brought material shifts as well as deep cultural tensions, revealing an ongoing conflict between local identities and global influences.

Indian Society and the Crisis of Cultural Identity

India is both a huge and diverse country made up of various communities of different races, ethnicities, languages, religions, and cultures. Its civilization evolved through synthesis, with globalization being the latest influence. Migration remains a major driver of India's demographic and cultural diversity.

The Western modernity deeply affected Indian society since the late nineteenth century. India has long absorbed Western and American ideas for cultural, economic, and technological modernization¹³. Colonial rule and Western rationalism contrasted with India's spiritual ethos, while globalization has produced hybrid consumer cultures that challenge collectivist traditions.

Adaptability is a great strength of India. Family, caste, and religion help mediate between indigenous values and

global forces²⁰. Yet unequal global dynamics benefit elites while marginalizing others. Media and consumerism reshape lifestyles toward materialism, conflicting with traditional ethics. Digital expansion improves connectivity but introduces moral risks and cybercrime¹².

Commercialization affects education and medicine, narrowing humanistic values. Economic and gender disparities persist. Traditional arts, games, and regional practices decline, and food habits shift toward Western tastes. Still, kinship ties reinforce shared identity¹³.

Despite these strains, globalization has expanded India's cultural reach—through Yoga, Ayurveda, Bollywood, dance, and classical music—showcasing resilience and soft power. Thus, globalization generates identity challenges but also strengthens India's capacity to blend tradition and modernity⁴. □

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