

Socio-Economic Global Cultural Flow with Reference to Select Indian English Novels

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Abstract

*The world is unified by the word 'globalization' as a result of the growing interdependence of the world's societies, economies, technologies, cultures, investment and information. Today, everything is accessible at one's finger tips, because the world is interconnected. There is networking in all walks of life. Communication has become easier than ever and technology has begun to replace human resources. On one hand, globalization claims to have simplified living by interconnecting different parts of the world, but on the other hand, life seems to have become more complicated in the name of sociocultural networking and technological revolutions. The circulation of ideas, culture, language, and material goods as a result of networking, the reason for globalization, has been identified as global cultural flows, according to the social anthropologist and globalization theorist, Arjun Appadurai. The paper aims to look into the socio-cultural, political and economic impacts of globalization on developing countries like India, with the help of three contemporary novels of the twenty first century Indian English literature – *The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri, *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga, and *Q&A* by Vikas Swarup. It explores the aspects of globalization in the select novels, in an attempt to understand the modern world under the influence of globalization, liberalization and capitalization.*

Keywords: Globalization, Consequences, Society, Economy, Global Cultural Flow, Modernization

Introduction

Globalization is the phenomenon of the world nations becoming interdependent and interconnected to one another, overlapping socio-economic, cultural, political, technological and other realms of the society. It has evolved into a significant occurrence during the late nineteenth century. The interdependence and interrelationships of human and technological resources, culture, languages and media across the globe in the long run of advancement is the root cause of globalization. Globalization has influenced all aspects of life, from education, health and consumption to business and literature, laying out its advantages and disadvantages over the web of societies and individuals involved in the process. Due to massive networking,

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there is a continuous movement of people, resources, capital and technology from one part of the world to another. The migration of people due to exile and displacement take place so much now that any part of the world is multicultural and multilingual. Technological revolution is at the peak of globalization, connecting people all over the world and causing rapid changes in society. Arjun Appadurai, an anthropologist, talks about the concept of global cultural flow that interrelates the world and discusses the associated five scapes that keep the world bound: ethnoscapes, technoscapes, ideoscapes, mediascapes, financescapes. The concept defines the modern world and helps decode the process of globalization.

Global Cultural Flow

Arjun Appadurai in his work *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* identifies the mass movement and circulation of people, ideas, materials and money as the process of global cultural flow, across and around the world. It explores five scapes: (i) ethnoscapes, which implies the movement or migration of people from nation to another (ii) technoscapes, the flow of technology and machineries throughout the world (iii) financescapes, the cross-border movement of capitals and currencies (iv) mediascapes, referring to the global circulation of print and electronic media, and (v) ideoscapes, which implies the global flow of ideologies. In today's globalized world, there is a constant movement of these concepts from one part of the world to another.

Globalization in Literature

Contemporary fiction reflects the process and consequences of globalization with a universal appeal, thus leading to researches on issues related. They encompass the concepts of globalization and global cultural flow, mirroring the contemporary world. The novels chosen to present the paper are *The Lowland*, *The White Tiger*, and *Q&A*, all of which employ in it the themes of modernization and globalization. *The Lowland* (2013) deals with themes of immigration and cultural identity conflict. The novel portrays the relationship of two brothers Subhash and Udayan. Subhash, the elder brother leaves India for higher education but Udayan stays there and gets himself involved in the Naxalite movement. It depicts the complexity relationships, the transportation of people and ideologies among nations, and identity crisis in the rapidly changing times. The concept of ethnoscapes is evident in this novel, where there is this migration of people from one land to another, from India to US and vice versa. As people migrate, they carry with them the culture, values, ideologies and practices of that particular space. But as they begin to assimilate the new beliefs and values of a new place, there happens cultural hybridity. Either the two sets of customs and beliefs form a blend to give rise to a new thought process; or the individual abandons one for the other, in which case the transformation is greater. In the novel, when Subhash migrates to USA, though he adopts the American culture and lifestyle, there was always a string that kept him attached to his roots. Subhash married Gauri from India, and as they moved in to USA together, Gauri soon got adapted to the ways of living there. She transformed drastically, from her clothes, hairstyle to her principles and being. This kind of modernization is an example of socio-cultural globalization, often accompanied with transnationalism and transculturalism.

The novel *The White Tiger* (2008) by Aravind Adiga won the Man Booker Prize in 2008. It portrays the dark sides of Indian economy and the story of a lower middle class auto rickshaw puller's son, Balram, from rags to riches, repression to redemption through corruption, like most other rich men's story in India. The novel also focuses on the liberalization and globalization in India, especially its free market policies and how it has been affecting the rural India. Globalization has created two faces of India – the India of Light and the India of Darkness. The idea of 'financescapes' that Arjun Appadurai discusses finds an example of the economic globalization

and its consequences portrayed in *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga. Globalization has been there since the 1980s. In the year 1991, the new economic policy was introduced in India under the leadership of Prime Minister, PV Narasimha Rao, which brought in Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization, as per the capitalistic model of LPG. It was aimed to raise the economic growth, and thus, facilitated international trade and commerce within and across India, without any restrictions. The novel presents an India that is constantly being transformed and restructured, in order to meet rapid development in all sectors. It presents an India that is corrupted by modernization, and divided by the new economic policies, where the rich becomes richer and the poor becomes poorer. There is no straight way out there for the poor to righteously become rich, and therefore, the poor like Balram Halwai become rich through corrupt means and conspiracies.

The novel *Q&A* (2005) by Vikas Swarup presents the story of the “Slum dog Millionaire”, Ram Mohammad Thomas, an eighteen year old waiter from a poor city of India. The boy participates in a TV reality quiz show and wins the show by answering all the questions correct. Here the TV and its reality shows are examples of globalization of technology and media, which defines the ‘technoscapes’ and ‘mediascapes’ discussed by Arjun Appadurai. Reality shows are private shows, as opposed to the programmes of government owned channels, and thus setting up a platform of popularity and limelight for any common man. The novel, and the film adapted from it, are examples of narratives of the modern day globalized India, which is manifested in the neoliberal economies and the very process of globalization.

Conclusion

Globalization has brought upon the world as many possibilities, as the challenges. In a globalized world, all aspects of life from education, culture and economy have changed. The order of life in the society has transformed. It has brought with it many opportunities, which would never have been possible otherwise; but it has also sown seeds of capitalization, privatization and liberalization, which has disastrously affected the majority of the masses in countries like India. Individual and community life has diverse impacts of globalization, much as a result of the choice between the possibilities and challenges of globalized world.

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