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Q19

'Globalisation is generally said to promote cultural homogenisation but due to this cultural specificities appear to be strengthened in the Indian society.' Elucidate.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · GS I · 15 marks · Globalisation and Indian Society

Effects of globalization on Indian society.

Core demand of the question

- Elucidate how globalisation is said to homogenise culture, yet in India cultural specificities appear strengthened
- Give both the homogenising pressure and the Indian counter-move

Revision summary

Global media, brands, and English work-life spread a similar urban consumer style.

That is the homogenisation usually blamed on globalisation.

In India the same openness enlarges regional film, language politics, caste association, and religious publicness.

Glocalisation packages yoga, food, and pilgrimage for a world market without ending local rules of marriage.

The result is hybrid everyday life plus stronger identity badges, not simple cultural sameness.

Introduction

Globalisation spreads English, brands, digital platforms, and a consumer style that can look the same from Seoul to Surat. In India that pressure is real, but language pride, caste and religious associations, **regional cinema**, and packaged 'tradition' have also grown sharper, so specificity is not simply dying.

Body

The homogenising side

- Satellite television, later smartphones, and global streaming put the same songs, fashion, and English idioms into towns that once had only a local mela and a regional channel.
- Malls, quick food chains, and credit cards standardise youth leisure in metros; work in IT and BPOs rewards a global professional self.
- English-medium schooling as an aspiration can thin regional literary habits among the urban middle class.
- A world beauty and fitness market can sideline local dress and food as 'only festive'.

Why Indian specificities look stronger

- **Globalisation is also a market for difference:** **regional cinema** (Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and the later national boom of south films), festival calendars, and pilgrimage towns sell distinct

culture to a bigger audience, including the diaspora.

- Language movements, official language politics, and classical-language status fights show that groups use the open public sphere to harden, not drop, linguistic identity.
- Caste associations, khap-like bodies, and online endogamy tools use technology to police marriage, which is a thickening of old specificity with new kit.
- Religious publicness-temple corridors, Tabligh and church networks, and televised ritual-grew with media, so faith marks are more visible, not less.
- Food, yoga, Ayurveda, and handicrafts are branded for export; the local becomes a global product, which is **glocalisation** rather than erasure.
- Regional parties and federal politics reward voters who feel culturally distinct, so globalisation's economic integration sits beside political fragmentation of identity.
- The Indian village and small town still organise life by jati, kinship, and festival even when the same youth wears jeans and uses a Chinese phone.

How both can be true together

- **Homogenisation is strongest in surface consumption:** phones, cricket ads, and office English.
- Specificity is strongest in marriage, ritual, language of the home, and political mobilisation.
- Hybrid forms-English plus caste, pizza plus Karva Chauth, global Islam plus Indian Muslim neighbourhoods-are the ordinary Indian outcome.

Way forward for the answer

- **Do not pick only McDonald's or only khaps. Show the double movement:** market sameness at the top of the shopping bag, and sharper cultural badges in family and politics.

Flow diagram

Global media brands work -> Surface homogenisation
 Global media brands work -> Market for difference
 Market for difference -> Language caste region faith
 Language caste region faith -> Stronger public specificities
 Surface homogenisation -> Hybrid Indian everyday

Conclusion

Globalisation does push a common consumer and media culture in India. At the same time, language, caste, region, and religion have used the same markets and media to become more organised and visible. Indian society therefore shows homogenisation of lifestyle surfaces and a strengthening of cultural specificities at the core of belonging.

Facts & figures

Glocalisation

Process in which global products and media take local cultural form, and local culture is sold globally.

Regional cinema

Large non-Hindi film industries that expanded with multiplexes, satellite TV, and later streaming.

Diaspora circuits

Remittances and return visits that fund temples, weddings, and language schools, hardening home culture abroad and at home.

Caste-endogamy online

Matrimonial platforms that use technology to continue jati marriage rules on a bigger scale.

English plus home language

Typical urban bilingual pattern in which office English does not replace festival and kinship speech.

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