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Q20

Are we losing our local identity for the global identity? Discuss.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · GS I · 15 marks · World's Physical Geography

Salient features of world's physical geography.

Core demand of the question

- Are we losing our local identity for the global identity?
- Discuss both sides and give a clear view

Revision summary

Global consumption, English, and digital platforms press on local dress, language, and streets.

Regional cinema, GI crafts, festivals, and elections show local identity still strong.

The process is often glocal remix, not a clean replacement.

Minor languages and crafts lose more than metro hybrid youth culture.

- **A clear view:** some loss is real; a blank global self is not the Indian majority story.

Policy should fund mother tongue, GI, and cultural rights in the same cities that host malls.

Introduction

Global brands, English, and digital platforms have entered Indian streets, but local languages, food, and festivals have not simply died. The fair view is mixed: some local forms are thinning, many are remixing, and a few are travelling globally. We are not swapping one identity for another so much as living a glocal tangle.

Body**Pressures that look like loss**

- Malls, streaming, and fast food standardise youth dress, accent, and leisure in metros; a high-street in Bengaluru can resemble one in Dubai more than a nearby Pete bazaar.
- English-medium aspiration and social-media English squeeze dialect and tribal languages; UNESCO's endangered-language lists include many Indian tongues.
- Global work hours, migration to Gulf and Silicon Valley, and corporate culture can weaken joint-family ritual time and local associational life.
- Homogenised apartment design and glass IT parks erase mohalla skylines that once marked a town's local face.

Evidence that the local is not gone

- Regional cinema, now on the same OTT platforms, has a national and diaspora reach that a 1990s Delhi-only culture did not give Tamil, Malayalam, or Korean-style Indian indies.
- **GI tags** (Darjeeling tea, Banaras brocade, Alphonso, Basmati figs) and craft clusters show the state and market using local identity as value, not only as nostalgia.

- Yoga, Ayurveda, and Indian food went global, which is local identity exported, even when it is packaged for a foreign buyer.
- Mandir-masjid calendars, caste and gotra practice, and regional politics remain powerful; globalisation did not flatten the Indian election into a single consumer brand.
- Mother-tongue schooling movements, classical music sabhas, and village festivals continue beside the mall.

Glocalisation, not a simple swap

- McDonald's in India sells vegetarian lines; Bollywood copies Hollywood form and still uses Indian kinship plots; this is Arjun Appadurai's scapes, not a one-way erasure.
- Diaspora "Little Indias" abroad and "global" cafes in Jaipur both show identity as portable mix.
- Hindutva, regional parties, and language pride are partly reactions to global cultural flow; local identity can harden, not only fade.
- Climate and city migration mix Bihari, Bengali, and North-East workers in the same chawl, creating new local hybrids rather than a pure global self.

Who loses more

- Adivasi and minor language groups lose more, because the global-and-state mainstream does not fund their media the way it funds Hindi-English pop.
- Poor neighbourhoods get global cheap goods but lose commons and crafts; rich neighbourhoods buy both a global lifestyle and curated "ethnic" decor.
- **Women and youth often carry the mix first:** jeans and karva chauth can sit in one life, which is change, not always loss.

A clear view

- We are losing some unrepeatable local crafts, dialects, and street forms; that loss is real and should be named.
- We are not becoming a blank global identity; Indian family, food, faith, and politics still organise most lives.
- **The live process is selection and remix under unequal power:** capital and English have more volume than a hill language.

Way forward for policy

- Fund mother-tongue content, GI crafts, and community radio so local identity has a market, not only a museum.
- Teach history of places in schools so a global job does not mean an empty hometown.
- Use **Digital India** to archive dialects and folk forms rather than only to deliver English apps.
- Keep the Constitution's cultural rights (**Articles 29-30**) meaningful in city planning so pockets of local life are not cleared as unofficial.

Flow diagram

Global brands English media -> Pressure on local
Language craft festival -> Glocal remix
Pressure on local -> Glocal remix
Diaspora GI OTT -> Glocal remix
Endangered tongues -> Real loss
Glocal remix -> Clear view mixed

Conclusion

India is not simply losing local identity to a global one. Global forms press hard on language, craft, and city look, yet festivals, regional media, GI products, and politics keep local life thick. The honest discussion is glocal remix under unequal power, and the way forward is to give local tongues and crafts the same infrastructure that global brands already enjoy.

Facts & figures

GI tags

Geographical Indications that legally tie a product to a place, used to defend local craft and crop identity.

UNESCO endangered languages

Lists that include several Indian languages under pressure from larger tongues and media.

Articles 29-30

Constitutional cultural and educational rights of minorities, a legal shield for local identity.

OTT regional cinema

Streaming that carries Tamil, Malayalam, and other industries beyond their old territorial markets.

Glocalisation

Global products and media adapting to local taste, the typical Indian pattern rather than total replacement.