

Globalization and emerging trends of consumerism: Is Marxism relevant in 21st century?

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Abstract

In The Communist Manifesto, Marx analyzed succinctly the globalizing tendencies inherent within capitalism: 'The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere' (Marx & Engels 1967: 83). He described how this process of globalization produced a levelling and loss of distinct local cultures, superseding the claims of parochialism, regionalism and nationalism: 'The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country' (Ibid.). The founding principle of capitalism in globalization is the pursuit of self-interest which is achieved economically through competition between producers and producers, consumers and consumers. This kind of competition has resulted in further stratifying the societies. The present paper looks into the trends of consumerism in an era of globalization that has created such euphoria in societies which have resulted in reconsidering the views of Marx in terms of stratifying and polarizing the societies in terms of various groups resulting from materialism.

Keywords

Globalization; Consumerism; Culture; Elite; Marxism

Introduction

Human societies have not always been aware of why they act in certain ways, let alone of the nature of the world they inhabit. Nonetheless, during the past ten thousand years, understanding our place in the

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scheme of things has been a dynamic process (Robertson 2003: 14). With this dynamism, we ought to consider the changes in terms of challenges, constraints and welfare that human societies have experienced in history and more particularly during the past ten thousand years. Many theorists believe that some of these changes have their origin in the human propensity to cooperate. However, we need to consider environmental circumstances, the availability of resources, the nature of technology and pressures exerted by population densities to have a better and schematic understanding of the developments thereof.

Human societies developed a mix of strategies to deal with these possible constraints on their survival and well-being, but interestingly they also come to be influenced by the extent to which they were connected. Interconnections provided a powerful dynamic long before it developed global proportions (Ibid.). Within the broader purview of these interconnections, the world changed radically over the twentieth century and more so over the past few decades. Much of this change is associated with the development of new technologies and one of the outcomes of this has been the reduction of the effects of time and space on everyday life and more specifically on trade.

It is now widely asserted that we live in an era in which the greater part of social life is determined by global processes, in which national cultures, national economies, national borders and national territories are dissolving (Hirst & Thompson 1999). For the past seven decades, more than ever, the world is shrinking, time and space boundaries are becoming permeable and societies are turning into a global scene on which we all have our roles to play, although with varied intensity and significance. The boundaries are getting transgressed and we are enabled to travel all around the globe even when we are completely motionless. The world is being driven beyond the rules and regulations of 'society' and we are thrown into a vortex of events and changes. Every day our identities are put to introspection and reconsideration because of the multiple and varied roles we are put to play. *Beck* (1992) argues that modern social life creates new parameters of risk and danger which we must face as individuals and collectivities. According to *Beck*, we are today witnessing, not the final breakdown of the Enlightenment nor a transition to some postmodern social universe, but instead, modernity coming to terms with itself, its radicalization. *Beck* argues that the techno-scientific development of modern societies in the West has now developed to the point where humankind is released from traditional constraints of the social and natural environments. This development opens the social world in the widest possible sense to a systematic

questioning and critique of modernization itself. History, as it were, is today being rewritten backwards: problems resulting from techno-economic development are increasingly subject to reflexively infused systems of action aimed at preventing, minimizing, or reordering the unintended, destructive effects of industrial modernization. (Elliot 1995: 720). Time is passing quickly and space is shrinking. Hybridization is encroaching everything, regardless, whether the victim is culture or identity. What it signifies is that some significant transformations are taking place in the last few decades, which are omnipresent, affect all spheres of life and are manipulating our attention from local to global. From this omnipresence, ubiquity and multidimensionality stem the obscurity of the process, which is termed Globalization.

The study of globalization in Sociology revolves primarily around two main classes of phenomena that have become increasingly significant in the last few decades. These are the emergence of a globalized economy based on new systems of production, finance and consumption; and the idea of global culture. This is often connected with the spread of particular patterns of consumption and culture and ideology of consumerism at the global level. The volume and speed of these global flows have intensified what *Held Et al.* refer to as the 'deepening enmeshment of the local and global such that the impact of distant events is magnified while even the most local developments may come to have enormous global consequences' (Held Et al 1999: 15) *Castells* sees new technologies as vitally important in generating this unprecedented speed and scope in the management of the economy which allows for the easy movement of production, financing, and products across borders.

Technology facilitates globalization, but the imperatives of 'global capitalism' are its motivating force. The key to global capitalism is its multinational character and the fact that it has greatly increased the range of commodification. Its founding principle is the pursuit of self-interest which is achieved economically through competition between producers and producers, consumers and consumers. This competition, under capitalist logic, creates a state in which the right amount of goods and services at the right price are made available to meet consumer demand. The principle, in the simplest terms, is that increasing demand will put pressure on supply; prices will go up in response to the pressure; and demand will drop back, in the face of the raised prices, to reach an equilibrium with supply (Schirato & Webb 2003: 79). Corporations shift production to lower the cost of production. Investors move the capital to find the most profitable investment. Corporations move products to reach every possible consumer. But demographic and cultural globalization are

similarly driven by global capital's profit motives. Airlines seek to fill seats and drive up demand by enticing travellers from around the world. Film Studios seek to sell their films in the largest possible number of markets. Media corporations seek to deliver the largest possible number of viewers to advertisers. *Leslie Sklair* (2001: 6) focuses on the 'profit-driven culture ideology of consumerism' through which 'the globalization of the capitalist system reproduces itself'. To thrive, *Sklair* argues, global capitalism must 'persuade us that the meaning and value of our lives are to be found principally in what we possess'.

Global culture then results from transnational capitalist efforts to shape desires and create needs, opening up new areas for capital accumulation. Observing cultural globalization, *Waters* opines that culture shows greater tendencies towards globalization because the process proceeds more rapidly in contexts in which relationships are mediated through symbols. Culture is the field where the free flow of images and symbols can take place. Hence 'a globalized culture admits a continuous flow of ideas, information, commitment, values and tastes mediated through mobile individuals, symbolic tokens and electronic simulations'. (*Waters* 1995: 111). A distinguishing trait of contemporary culture is consumption - 'consumption becomes the main form of self-expression and the chief force of identity. It implies that both material and non-material items, including kinship, affection, art and intellect become commodified, that is their value is assessed by the context of their exchange, rather than the context of their production or use.' (*ibid.* 112) Consumer culture is most commonly interpreted as imposition of the Western and more particularly, the American cultural models of life. From this perspective, some authors refer to globalization as *Americanization*, even as *McDonaldization* or *Cocacolanization*, whose common principles are efficiency, calculability, profitability, uniformity.

Consistent with the transnational media corporations' aim of reaching consumers around the world, the most fundamental effects of globalization is attracting more and more people to consumer lifestyles (*Mankekar* 1998: 32). Based on his study of effects of globalization in Nepal, *Liechty* concludes that for more and more people around the world, 'modernity is an experience, first and foremost, of life in emerging local consumer societies, an experience tied to the steady encroachment of global capitalism and its cultural logics into ever more communities and ever more domains of life (*Liechty* 2001: 34). *Noam Chomsky* commented, 'This is also true of what are very misleadingly called "markets." Markets, in whatever form they take, are also constructed, managed, designed in

specific ways in our particular system, and this goes back for hundreds of years. Markets are typically double-edged. Market discipline is a great thing for the poor and the vulnerable. But for the rich and the powerful, they demand and receive protection from the Nanny State. That's the way markets have always been, with very rare exceptions, and it's dramatically true in the United States. We call this "free-enterprise economy," and so on. That's only very partially true. For one thing, it's largely managed internally to huge tyrannies called corporations, which are interlinked in all sorts of ways in strategic alliances and so on.' People around the world are attracted to cultural icons, styles, and meanings generated in cosmopolitan centers, cultures have become disconnected disembedded or territorialized, rather than being closely tied to time and place. When Indians are attracted towards western music, Pakistanis towards Bollywood, cultural products are disconnected from their point of origin. It is to be believed that people around the world now form communities based on supranational allegiances rooted in consumption. *Beynon and Dunkerley* see consumer identities as even supplanting identities rooted in nation and class. Transnational, transcultural, they argue, aspirational clusters, based on what people would like to be rather than what they are, come into existence as a result of commercial life-styling and are more real to people today than the surviving vestiges of class solidarity. Indeed, the two great traditional markets of collective identity, nation and class, are seen to be disintegrating under the onslaught of global media. (Beynon & Dunkerley 2000: 12) Various sociologists like *Hebdige* (1989: 90-91), anthropologists, like *Mathews* (2000: 9) and media scholars like *Richards* (2000: 29) suggest that 'identity proffered through the market' is deadly steadily eroding national and class identity. It can be recognized that the effects of globalization are uneven and are mediated by class and gender. Peoples' encounter with global flows and connections is vitally shaped by class.

The profit oriented free market has also let loose the present day social realities. Consumerism and materialism have overwhelmed modern society affecting every aspect of life. Society has become impersonal, mechanical and inhumane. The main attributes of consumerism in the era of globalization could be summed up as follows:

Elite Identity and Consumerism

Affluent Indians see the opportunity for cosmopolitan consumption as the primary benefit of globalization. The elite middle class people saw new choice of commodities as a central indicator of the benefits of

economic liberalization (Fernandes 2000: 614). Previously access to goods was limited to those who had the financial means to travel abroad to purchase them. But, today, abroad is now in India. While the opening of markets has been most essential in encouraging consumerism, films, television serials, and advertising, all of them which glamorize international standards of consumption, also played an important role in inciting affluent Indians' desire to consume.

Elite identity appears to be more and more rooted in cosmopolitan consumption. Consumption becomes a way of advertising ones 'cosmopolitan discernment' (Mathews 2000: 21). By consuming Pepsi rather than *ThumsUp*, or Domino's Pizza rather than a roadside *Somosa* (at a cost - in the case of the pizza, which might be twenty times higher), one presents oneself as a cosmopolitan, transnational mover who is oriented globally rather than locally. By wearing Jeans rather than a Dhoti, one presents oneself as oriented towards that transnational world. It would be appropriate to mention that the Indian Caste society is transforming into a society in which people are defined by consumption.

Thompson suggests that for those who can afford it, shopping becomes more than purchasing goods. Rather, shoppers feel that through the act of shopping they are buying into a more exciting, sensual world (Beynon & Dunkerley 2000: 6).

The orientation towards consuming the same goods that are consumed by other cosmopolitans in Europe, America, or elsewhere suggests that national identity is eroded by an identity rooted in consumption. The elite Indian who prefers Pepsi and Pizza Hut may see herself/himself as having more in common with the western consumer than the non-elite Indian who can only afford locally-produced goods. By embracing what is seen as cosmopolitan sensibilities, identities increasingly transnational rather than rooted in national groupings.

The market ideology of globalization gives a notion that people who cannot afford goods and live in rural areas are considered uncivilized and backward. They feel isolated from the privileged groups. This wrong notion creates an inferiority complex among the poor rural masses that urges them to migrate to the cities and towns in search of employment and better living. It encourages migration not only within a country but also encourages people to migrate to other countries. The migrant workers are the most exploited people. They suffer from insecurity and social exclusion. The social exclusion is deeper than the economic level and begs for attention, especially in the developed countries.

Role of Capitalist Class in Promoting Consumerism

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx analyzed succinctly the globalizing tendencies inherent within capitalism: 'The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere'. (Marx & Engels 1967: 83) He described how this process of globalization produced a levelling and loss of distinct local cultures, superseding the claims of parochialism, regionalism and nationalism: 'The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country' (Ibid.). He observed how established national industries were being destroyed and new industries created, which used not indigenous raw materials but materials imported from remote regions of the globe; while the products themselves were consumed all over the world. New wants were being generated, which could be satisfied only by the products of distant countries. This globalizing movement affected not only the production of goods, but intellectual production as well, so that, for example, 'from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature' (Ibid.: 84).

The elite, affluent or capitalist class works as an advertising agency to advance the interests of transnational corporations. Because of the fact that those who own and run MNCs cannot achieve their ends alone, the class includes the 'globalizing bureaucrats, politicians and professionals' that the corporations need to carry out their work (Sklair 2001: 295). This group remains a 'capitalist class' because it continues to direct or control the major forms of capital. This group comprises a distinctly transnational class because they operate across state borders to further the interest of global capital. Embracing the Marxian analysis of class, MNC executives, globalizing bureaucrats, politicians, and professionals share a similar relationship to the means of production, distribution and exchange (ibid.).

While the transnational capitalist class has an interest in promoting open markets and ensuring cheap labour, this class also shares a strong interest in promoting the culture ideology of consumerism (Ibid.: 6) which is central to the reproduction of the global capitalist system. The main aim of the transnational capitalist class is to sustain global capitalism based on mass consumerism. Whatever else might change or however social systems might diverge, people would all agree on one principle, namely the desirability of consuming more and more goods and services (Ibid.: 255). The prime culture-ideology task of global capitalism is to ensure that as many as possible consume as much as possible by inculcating beliefs about the intrinsic value of consumption as a 'good thing' and the

key component of the 'good life' (Ibid: 11). The transnational capitalist class attempts to create more than just the desire to consume; it wants to create the desire of everyone around the world to consume what the transnational corporations manufacture regardless of its quality.

Case Study

Tobacco is the single greatest cause of preventable death globally. Tobacco use leads most commonly to diseases affecting the heart, liver and lungs, with smoking being a major risk factor for heart attacks, strokes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (including emphysema and chronic bronchitis), and cancer (particularly lung cancer, cancers of the larynx and mouth, and pancreatic cancer). It also causes peripheral vascular disease and hypertension.

According to United States Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP), Worldwide, tobacco use causes more than 5 million deaths per year, and current trends show that tobacco use will cause more than 8 million deaths annually by 2030. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that tobacco caused 5.4 million deaths in 2004 and 100 million deaths over the course of the 20th century. The CDCP describes tobacco use as the single most important preventable risk to human health in developed countries and an important cause of premature death worldwide. Male and female smokers lose an average of 13.2 and 14.5 years of life, respectively. Smokers are three times as likely to die before the age of 60 or 70 as non-smokers.

Despite such dreadful implications of tobacco and smoking, the tobacco industry has emerged to be one of the largest industries of the globe. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates the following production of unprocessed tobacco by country/region in 2000:

Table 1.1 Production of unprocessed tobacco by country/region in 2000

S. No	Country	Production Quantity in tonnes
1.	China	2,397,200
2.	Brazil	908,679
3.	India	520,000
4.	United States of America	353,177
5.	Argentina	170,000
6.	Indonesia	164,851
7.	Malawi	118,000
8.	Pakistan	103,000
9.	Italy	100,000
10.	Zimbabwe	79,000

11.	Turkey	74,584
12.	Thailand	70,000
13.	, Democratic People's Republic of Korea	63,000
14.	Tanzania, United Republic of	50,600
15.	Canada	44,000
16.	Lao People's Democratic Republic	41,535
17.	Bulgaria	41,100
18.	Japan	40,000
19.	Poland	39,482
20.	Bangladesh	39,180

Source: Tobacco Production Quantity by Country < <http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=FAO&f=itemCode%3a826>>.

According to CDCP, nearly \$8.05 billion were spent by the cigarette industry in 2010 on advertising and promotion of cigarettes i.e. \$22 million spent a day.

There are approximately 120 million smokers in India. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), India is home to 12 percent of the world's smokers. Approximately 900,000 people die every year in India due to smoking as of 2009.

According to a 2002 WHO estimate, 30 percent of adult males in India smoke. Among adult females, the figure is much lower at between 3-5 percent.

According to the study, A Nationally Representative Case-Control Study of Smoking and Death in India, tobacco will be responsible for 1 in 5 of all male deaths and 1 in 20 of all female deaths in the country in 2010. This means approximately 1 million Indians would die annually from smoking in 2010.

Knowing the consequences of smoking, the smoking industry continues to exist. Smoking in India is prohibited in only in public since October 02, 2008 under Prohibition of Smoking in Public Places Rules, 2008 and Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003. No such law has been implemented till date which would completely ban it.

Prices of Food increase and those of luxuries decrease

There has been a continuous decline in the price of the technological products meant for the emerging middle class and those of rich. Be that of a mobile phone of upper range, TVs, LCDs, LEDs, Music systems, etc. a

sharp decline of their price is witnessed for years together. This decline straightway goes in favour of the rich and furthermore the companies are in a position to yearn for expansion of market by letting the lower middle class within its ambit thereby earning surplus.

The information available in secondary sources reveal a sharp decline in the branded and such mobile phones which are more luxurious. However those phones which are within the reach of poor witness least decline in the price. Same is the case with computers, laptops and other related products.

However on the other side, in the last few years, there has been a significant increase in global food prices. The global cereal prices increased 150 per cent during 2005 to second quarter of 2008. The world faces a new food economy that likely involves both higher and more volatile food prices, and evidence of both phenomena was on view in 2011. After the food price crisis of 2007–08, food prices started rising again in June 2010, with international prices of maize and wheat roughly doubling by May 2011. The peak came in February 2011, in a spike that was even more pronounced than that of 2008, according to the food price index of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Although the food price spikes of 2008 and 2011 did not reach the heights of the 1970s, price volatility—the amplitude of price movements over a particular period of time—has been at its highest level in the past 50 years. This volatility has affected wheat and maize prices in particular. For soft wheat, for example, there were an average of 41 days of excessive price volatility a year between December 2001 and December 2006. From January 2007 to June 2011, the average number of days of excessive volatility more than doubled to 88 a year (Almanzar Et al 2013: 1-2).

Lustig highlights five major drivers of rising global food prices (Lustig 2008: 3). They are: (a) long term supply problems; (b) rise in oil prices; (c) changes in demand due to bio fuels; (d) depreciation in dollar and low interest rate in the US and speculative activities; (f) export restrictions of developing countries. Thus, surge in food prices is 'both a real and a monetary phenomenon and both market-driven and policy-induced'. All such factors have something to do with globalization.

According to the 2011 report of the World Bank, Global food prices continue to rise. The World Bank's food price index increased by 15 percent between October 2010 and January 2011 and is only 3 percent below its 2008 peak. The last six months of 2011 had seen sharp increases in the global prices of wheat, maize, sugar and edible oils, with a relatively smaller increase in rice prices. Higher global wheat prices have fed into significant increases in local wheat prices in many countries.

Higher maize, sugar, and oil prices have contributed to increase the costs of various types of food, though local maize prices have largely been stable in Sub-Saharan Africa. Local rice prices have increased in line with global prices in some large rice-consuming Asian countries. These food price rises create macro vulnerabilities, particularly for countries with a high share of food imports and limited fiscal space, as well as increases in poverty. Estimates of those who fall into, and move out of, poverty as a result of price rises since June 2010 show there is a net increase in extreme poverty of about 44 million people in low- and middle-income countries. In the immediate term, it is important to ensure that further increases in poverty are curtailed by taking measures that calm jittery markets and by scaling up safety net and nutritional programs. Investments in raising environmentally sustainable agricultural productivity, better risk-management tools, less food intensive biofuel technologies, and climate change adaptation measures are all necessary over the medium term to mitigate the impact of expected food price volatility on the most vulnerable.

The World Bank further reports that The World Bank's food price index rose by 15 percent between October 2010 and January 2011, is 29 percent above its level a year earlier, and only 3 percent below its June 2008 peak. A breakdown of the index shows that the grain price index remains 16 percent below its peak mainly due to relatively stable rice prices, which are significantly lower than in 2008. The increase over the last quarter is driven largely by increases in the price of sugar (20 percent), fats and oils (22 percent), wheat (20 percent), and maize (12 percent).

High and volatile food prices are two different phenomena with distinct implications for consumers and producers. High food prices may harm poorer consumers because they need to spend more money on their food purchases and therefore may have to cut back on the quantity or the quality of the food they buy or economize on other needed goods and services. For food producers, higher food prices could raise their incomes—but only if they are net sellers of food, if increased global prices feed through to their local markets, and if the price developments on global markets do not also increase their production costs.

It is important to remember that in rural areas the line between food consumers and producers is blurry. Many households both consume and produce agricultural commodities. Therefore, if prices become more volatile and these households reduce their spending on seeds, fertilizer, and other inputs; this may affect the amount of food available for their own consumption. And even if the households are net sellers of food, producing less and having less to sell will reduce their household income

and thus still affect their consumption decisions. Finally, increased price volatility over time can also generate larger profits for investors, drawing new players into the market for agricultural commodities. Increased price volatility may thus lead to increased—and potentially speculative—trading that in turn can exacerbate price swings further.

This clearly signifies that the consumable items of the poor are witnessing a price hike and those of luxury items is decreasing on daily basis. Even before the food crisis, the poor and vulnerable were significantly left behind. Rising food prices would further undermine the food security and livelihoods of the most vulnerable by eroding their already limited purchasing power. Poor people spend 60 to 70 per cent of their income on food and they have little capacity to adapt as prices rise and wages may not adjust accordingly.

Commodification of Cultures

With the increasing division of labour and the emergence of markets, useful things have started to become sold and bought. They began a new career as commodities. Since *Aristotle* the dialectic face of commodities, later on in detail elaborated by *Karl Marx*, is well known, they carry value in use and value in exchange. Nowadays, where we understand the economy as a social construction and are aware of the relativity of value given to objects, we are still confronted with the same distinction and also with the transition of objects into commodities. The commodification process has not come to an end yet. It has gained a new pace.

Classical economists such as *Adam Smith* and *David Ricardo* downplayed the role of an object's use-value, seeing this as insignificant in the determination of value. *Marx*, on the other hand, drew a sharp distinction between use-value and exchange-value, arguing that these are two (inseparable) parts of a whole, what he referred to as the 'dialectic of the commodity'. This is because all commodities (defined by *Marx* as anything that satisfies a human want) function as both 'objects of utility' and 'depositories of value'. He argued that the use-values of commodities have different qualities, while their exchange-values (about other commodities) have different quantities. This is because a commodity only has exchange-value about other commodities; to use *Marx's* example, 'every other commodity now becomes a mirror of the linen's value'. (Shepherd 2002: 183-201). *Marx* mentions in 'Das Kapital', Volume One: 'The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as 'an immense accumulation of commodities,' its unit being a single commodity. Our investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of a commodity.'

Nowadays, where we understand the economy as a social construction and are aware of the relativity of value given to objects, we are still confronted with the same distinction and also with the transition of objects adding to the attribute "use value" the property of 'value in exchange'. This process - in contemporary terms known as commodification - did not come to an end yet. Still we are witnesses of new transformation processes in which useful things enrich their essence - they become commodities by showing the twofold character of value in use and value in exchange. This process of commodification has devastated labour through the commodification of labour. It subjects labour to unregulated exchange hence we get intensified exploitation. It has subjected land or more broadly nature, land, water, air to commodification of what comes to us in the form of climatic change.

The analysis of "commodification" can be seen as just another instance of 'essentializing', a term popular on the contemporary left. It is now asserted that almost everything has a price in a market economy and so has the culture.

The increasing penetration of the mass media among the poor, the growing investments and profits by transnational corporations in the sale of cultural commodities and the saturation of mass audiences with messages that provide the poor with vicarious experiences of individual consumption and adventure defines the current challenge of cultural colonialism. The commodification of culture serves two goals: one economic and the other political: to capture markets for its cultural commodities and to establish hegemony by shaping popular consciousness. The export of entertainment is one of the most important sources of capital accumulation and global profits displacing manufacturing exports. In the political sphere, cultural imperialism plays a major role in dissociating people from their cultural roots and traditions of solidarity, replacing them with media created needs that change with every publicity campaign. The political effect is to alienate people from traditional class and community bonds, atomizing and separating individuals from each other.

The commodification of culture serves the interests of the capitalist class in so many ways. It is a largely accepted fact that the tourism industry is gaining its importance in the global market and as such, there has been an argument that tourism causes cultural commodification which is based on a largely unexamined reliance on Marx's labour theory of value, source of what Barbara Herrnstein Smith has referred to as a 'double discourse of value', in which an intrinsic and sacred cultural sphere of value is presumed to circulate independent of an unstable and profane

economic sphere of value. It is widely common for destinations to use the aspect of culture as a means to attract tourists. This means making culture a commodity and hence packaging and selling it for consumption. The increasing tourism demand inevitably leads to the commodification of cultures, as the tourists want to experience cultures different from their own. This idea has been given a shape of a commodity by the capitalist class has been put in the market place for sale thereby putting aside those to whom the culture belonged to. There proves to be a big gap between those who produce the culture and those who consume it. It is here where the interests of the capitalists are served. They seek the production of the cultural commodities from the workers at a very cheaper price and sell the same to the tourists and even export the same by earning an extremely large margin of the profit which alienates the worker from the product of his labour and from the larger community.

Overburden of Loans

Post globalization scenario in the market has drastically changed and consumerism in India is diverted to more of lust than limited to needs. People are now easily confusing things with what they need and what they want in its true sense. But stuffing plenty of nice things which we do not need deprive the other consumers of the things they require for their survival. Luxury has now set aside the notion of need. As a result, the size of the houses is ever-expanding with the decline in fertility although. The consumption patterns are so much a part of the lives of people that to change them would require a massive cultural overhaul in the consumer society of the day now, people replace their goods with newer ones, use them and throw them away. The notion of repairing is declining every possible day. In addition to purchasing these items, you also need to consider the total cost of owning them. With mobile phones and tablets, in addition to the original purchase, you also have the additional costs of texting, roaming charges and application charges. A newer vehicle often has higher insurance costs, registration costs and maintenance costs. Many people consider car payments as a way of life, but if people continue driving their current vehicles until they need another one and save what they were paying for monthly payments you may be able to pay cash for a different vehicle in the future. Even if people cannot afford the entire cost, they would at least be able to pay a considerable amount of it. One cannot afford a vehicle if she/he needs to finance it longer than 3 years. Some car loans now are up to 7 to 8 years. If people end up financing that long to make payments reasonable for your budget, they may end up owing more on your car than your insurance will pay if you

happen to have an accident. If people purchase a home or more expensive home, then you may incur additional costs such as higher utility costs, décor and maintenance costs. When purchasing a larger home, you may have additional costs of purchasing more furniture to fill the rooms than you had previously thought.

The attracting potential of the transnational corporations through the medium of advertisement, films, TV serials, etc. has been such that people are more and more getting driven to the products they manufacture. And interestingly it is the capitalist class or the advocates of capitalism at governing level who introduced the banking facilities across the societies to attract more and more consumers regardless whether they are in a position to buy it or not. As a consequence, loans seem to have been an inevitable part of our life in the context of globalization. There would be hardly any person who is not under the debt of banks not for the basic needs but for products which are more luxurious than of basic need. With the credit plans and financing plans available, it is very easy for people to get into financial difficulties. One can purchase almost anything on a monthly payment plan, but if you get into too many of these plans you will find yourself having trouble living within your means. The payments may not seem like a lot until you get a number of them to pay each month. A major part of the consumer's salary gets diverted towards car loans, scooter loans, laptop loans, housing loans, credit cards and so on and a lesser part of it is seen to be spent on basic needs like food, education and health.

The notion that "people are born free and die slaves" has become a reality. Most people today are enslaved by debt till death and beyond! The master plan of absolute control of a new social order by the selective few - mainly the banking establishment - has been a tremendous success; banks today control entire nations! Due to globalization, faceless foreign bankers now dictate domestic policies of nations and intervene in the democratic process of those countries.

Impact on a Common Man

As a result of emerging consumer trends, the poor have been the direct victims. Unregulated globalization driven by an unquenchable thirst for consumerism can be considered as one of the many contributing factors to the ravaging socio-economic turmoil of modern times. The gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" has become so great that mankind will have an upright struggle to ever recover from its effect. At the fringes of utter affluence lie utter poverty, hopelessness and desperation. Poverty - the prevalent stigma of modern society - is on the

increase. Fundamentally, poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities to earn a decent income for a modest standard of living. In complete violation of human dignity and self-esteem, today, there are about 1.7 billion people, who live in absolute poverty.

An increase in the number of transnational companies, increase in the utility of transnational products, an increasing number of television, cars, air conditioners, has straightway led to the increased consumption of petrol, electricity, water and other basic commodities. Today's consumption is undermining the environmental resource base. It is exacerbating inequalities. And the dynamics of the consumption-poverty-inequality-environment nexus are accelerating. If the trends continue without change – not redistributing from high-income to low-income consumers, not shifting from polluting to cleaner goods and production technologies, not promoting goods that empower poor producers, not shifting priority from consumption for a conspicuous display to meeting basic needs – today's problems of consumption and human development will worsen. Human Development Report 1998 Overview, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reports that inequalities in consumption are stark. Globally, 20 percent of the world's people in the highest-income countries account for 86 percent of total private consumption expenditures – the poorest 20 percent a minuscule 1.3 percent. More specifically, the richest fifth: consume 45 percent of all meat and fish, the poorest fifth 5 percent; consume 58 percent of total energy, the poorest fifth less than 4 percent; have 74 percent of all telephone lines, the poorest fifth 1.5 percent; consume 84 percent of all paper, the poorest fifth 1.1 percent; Own 87 percent of the world's vehicle fleet, the poorest fifth less than 1 percent

The emerging consumer trends and the efforts to accumulate more and more has prompted the capitalists to introduce shopping malls and every possible effort is made to attract more and more costumers. One such effort is to make the shopping mall air-conditioned which in turn incurs huge consumption of electricity. Likewise, introduction of more and more goods which are accessible to the rich or upper middle class only e.g. air-conditioners, fridges, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, microwaves, etc. have added to more usage of electricity. And this capitalist usage of electricity has created inroads for the poor to take any benefit of electricity. When a maximum portion of electricity is utilized by the capital class, least is left for the poor who live in remote villages; and even with its excessive usage prompts the government to increase the rates of electricity which further pushes the poor towards the periphery and as such they completely lose the benefits of electricity and related things.

Despite an ambitious rural electrification program, some 400 million Indians lose electricity access during blackouts. While 80 per cent of Indian villages have at least an electricity line, just 52.5 per cent of rural households have access to electricity. In urban areas, access to electricity is 93.1 per cent in 2008. The overall electrification rate in India is 64.5 per cent while 35.5 percent of the population still lives without access to electricity.

The facility of financial assistance to the middle class has made easy for them to buy cars, homes, land, etc. This easy access has introduced ever increasing number of cars on roads which has simultaneously led to the increase in petrol and diesel consumption on the one side and a decline in public transport on the other creating further difficulties for the poor to travel. Excessive use of petrol and diesel has increased their rates and the tariff for the poor has also increased. The situation has reached that extent wherein increased tariff and less availability of public transport has dwindled the travel prospects of the poor. Besides increasing diesel rates straightway increase the price of food and related commodities which further breaks the backbone of the poor. Every such step pushes them far and far away from the mainstream and they get isolated.

Consumerism has also resulted in ecological imbalances. The natural habitat is being destroyed to create more goods and build more buildings affecting the weather. Global warming will eventually result in health problems. Industrial pollution is affecting people rather than focusing on simplicity. All such ecological implications have foremost influence on those who live either a nomadic or tribal life or have agriculture as their main source of economy.

Conclusion

Consumerism is widely seen as the cultural expression of developed capitalism and Marxist analyses from the 1970s onwards have tried to show how the development of an absorbent market for consumer goods was driven by the needs of accumulation and valorization in late capitalism. From the point of view of capital, there emerged a very real need for false needs.

The most fundamental process that generates consumerism is the nature of profit-maximizing competition in a capitalist economy. In a consumer period the capitalist becomes like other men: he regards himself as a free agent, able to step back from his role as producer and accumulator, even to give it up entirely for the sake of pleasure or happiness, for the first time he sees his life as an open book, as something to be shaped according to his choice.

Perhaps the simplest mechanism fostering a mass culture that underwrites consumerism is marketing. Advertising is everywhere; on television, on billboards, in newspapers and magazines. Corporations pay enormous sums for 'naming rights' of public facilities so that their brand is kept in people's minds. Educational news programs provided free to schools contain advertisements directed at children. Marketing research devises ever more sophisticated means of reaching the public and shaping people's preferences.

Consumerism has entrenched ideas of individual liberty and self-development beyond the point Marx could imagine possible within a capitalist society. Marx argues that it is not individualism that is the problem in a liberal-capitalist society but its inability to realize this freedom fully. The capitalist accumulation creates, inevitably, not only unknown freedoms but also unheard-of inequalities. These inequalities are not in themselves the problem. The problem is that these inequalities translate into inequalities of power and thus impact the personal freedom that is the central value in capitalist culture.

The emerging consumer tastes among the people have one hand given rise to more inequality and on the other hand, have been the main source of exploitation of the people. Class is getting redefined based on consumerism. Banks have emerged as the main stakeholders of exploitation with relation to consumerism. People are forced to buy such things which are beyond their access and are not much often even needed. Capitalists are seen to commodify culture and sell the same to tourists although the people who work on such commodification are isolated and alienated from this process.

Contemporary society hardly can think to be away from the gamut of globalization and capitalism in particular which promotes exploitation and inequality and accumulation of wealth in the hands of few. Such steps have to be taken, wherein at global level, it has to be made mandatory to at least spent a major chunk of profit on corporate social responsibility wherein the major chunk of capital accumulated by the capitalist class would be spent to uplift the poor and bring them to the mainstream.

The promotions of consumerism through advertisements have to be real and necessarily need to be passed by a sensor body which would first understand the reliability of the advertisement and the efficiency of the product that is promoted by advertisement. Besides, a compromised campaign has never to be promoted, e.g. if cigarette smoking is injurious to health then it has to be banned straightway, if polythene is harmful, the industries which manufacture them have to be banned. The capitalist

achievements embodied in consumer culture need to be protected from what produced them in the first place i.e. from capitalism. Incorporating the suggested comments would surely help in checking the prevailing exploitative, alienating and pauperizing character of globalization.

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