

# Cultural Globalisation

## Nuances versus Stereotypes



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Monographs on Globalisation and India –  
*Myths and Realities*, #15

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D-217, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park

Jaipur 302 016, India

Email: [citee@cuts.org](mailto:citee@cuts.org)

Website: [www.cuts-international.org/www.cuts-citee.org](http://www.cuts-international.org/www.cuts-citee.org)

**Researched and compiled by**

Quentin De Roquefeuil\*

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*\* Intern, CUTS CITEE. Kritika Kapil, Research Assistant, CUTS CITEE contributed to this monograph*

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# *Synopsis*

**1. Cultural Globalisation's Opponents and Sceptics:** Cultures around the globe are often described as victims of a process driven by economic motives. Such a complaint is often heard in anti-globalisation circles. However, these critics are themselves a product of cultural globalisation.

**2. The Glocal:** Global firms are often the most visible aspect of globalisation, and their impact on culture is undeniably important. However, global firms have to adapt their product and their business culture to local mores if they want to be successful. Multi National Corporations have often been described as "glocal" because of this adaptation process.

**3. Christmas in Bangkok:** Traditions also travel. However, they are transformed in the process, reflecting local cultures, societies and way of life. The example of how Christmas is celebrated in an overwhelmingly Buddhist country is enlightening.

**4. McDonaldisation or Cultural Appropriation?:** Borrowing the term from a popular book, McDonaldisation is supposed to describe the culturally homogenising effect of globalisation on the world. However, a close look at Chinese Mc Donald's reveals that Chinese consumers do not go to McDonalds for the same reasons as Westerners do. In fact Chinese people have re-interpreted Mc Donald's through their cultural lens.

**5. The Myth of Cultural Purity:** Is the sense that cultures, before globalisation took off, were really insulated and autonomous from one another historically correct? Or is it the case that cultures have always been under strong outside influences, and that these were more beneficial than detrimental?

**6. A Two way Street:** Economically smaller nations have had profound influences on bigger ones thanks to globalisation.

**7. Cultural Resistance:** Historically speaking, voluntary attempts to eradicate a culture and replace it with a new one have never succeeded. Colonial Latin America is a stark example of this reality. Local culture, it seems, never really goes away.

**8. Cultures within a Culture:** Although globalisation has had effects on different cultures, it has not been able to fully eliminate aspects of a culture. The culture rather acclimatizes to the changes it faces.

This monograph draws inspiration, examples and anecdotes from, and is in this respect heavily indebted to, the works of Tyler Cowen, Tom G. Palmer, Joana Breidenbach, Yunxiang Yan, James L. Watson, and Tulasi Srinivas.

# *Preface*

This monograph tries to breathe fresh air into the discourse/debate on cultural globalisation which has suffered from stereotypical characterisation as Americanisation and more broadly as Westernisation. The obvious advantages of globalisation providing a medium for cultural exchange which enables cultures to build on their strengths and discard obsolete/unsuitable elements have been missed in this debate. Underlying this glaring omission is the underestimation of the resilience and adaptability of cultures and the tendency to characterise cultures as fixed sets of mores/norms rather than evolving entities.

This monograph tries to incorporate this hitherto unmentioned element using a down-to-earth conversational style that is easy to follow and an approach relying on illustrations from real life. This method enhances the practical utility of this monograph.

Over the years CUTS offices have themselves evolved into a melting pot of international and local cultures. It is not unusual to find as many as five continents represented under the same CUTS roof. This publication is an attempt to take advantage of the opportunities of cross cultural collaboration afforded by such a heterogeneous mix. Thus, this monograph on cultural globalisation is also its product.

I hope that this CUTS offering is read by a broad gamut of global stakeholders – politicians, bureaucrats, academicians and the civil society – and leads to a more un-blinkered view of globalisation that helps the world make use of the afforded advantages.

Jaipur  
November 2009

**Pradeep S Mehta**  
Secretary General

# *Introduction*

*“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any”.* (Mahatma Gandhi)

The relationship between globalisation and culture has often been described and understood as a clash between fragile local cultures and almighty western consumerism. According to this understanding of how culture and globalisation interact, the battle between the local and the global will either take the shape of a “clash of civilisations”, or result in widespread cultural loss homogenising the cultural landscape around the world. Needless to say, these two scenarios do not view globalisation as having a positive impact on culture. For one it is the source of future conflicts, for the other it is a tool of Western dominance; “cultural imperialism”.

This monograph would like to offer the reader a more nuanced, more subtle understanding of the effects of globalisation on different cultures throughout the world. Is cultural homogenisation really a threat? Are cultures irresistibly clashing with one another? A different story can be told, one that is open ended and that does not view globalisation and culture as irreconcilable concepts.

The present work does pretend to be academic in form or in shape. In fact it seeks to illustrate themes in the academic debate in an anecdotal, dialogue format. In doing so it hopes to make the various arguments that have emerged from the fields of ethnography, ethnology, economics and cultural studies in general accessible to the general public. Critics of globalisation often accuse it of focusing on economic variables, without focusing on its socio-cultural impact. The following examples drawn from several ethnographic studies, anecdotal evidence from various works, and personal experience aim at illustrating that the effects of globalisation on culture are not as straightforward and detrimental as one might think.

## 1

## *Cultural Globalisation: Opponents and Sceptics*

Thomas and Vincent sit down at a cafe's terrace to catch up and chat, as millions do in France every day. After talking for awhile about Thomas's sister's reckless behaviour, Vincent's mom's new companion, and their philosophy of the arts exam coming up, the conversation dies out. Vincent's mind wanders to the scenery surrounding them. A Starbucks across the street, the movie theatre a little further up the street advertising the latest American blockbusters and the characteristic yellow "M" in the distance depicting the ever expanding fast food joint that is McDonalds.

"We are really getting eaten up by the Americans. And the worst thing is that people here and around the world do not even realise it... and if they do, they do not care. Our French culture is losing its distinctiveness and flavour and becoming as boring as a McDonalds' beef patty", said Vincent.

"Maybe you are right", answered his friend Thomas whose tone was not as unequivocal.

Thomas and Vincent were old friends, but had gone their own ways a number of years ago. Thomas liked dressing up to the latest fashion, kept up with reality shows on TV, listened to what his friend Vincent regarded as "commercial" music, and was least interested in politics. Vincent, on the other hand, had a carefree look; baggy pants made of hemp by Nepalese women, a shirt from Brazil that he brought back from Porto Alegre and long hair in the Jamaican style of "dreadlocks". His *iPod* was filled with tunes under the World Music genre. Very engaged politically, militantly anti-globalisation and a fervent anti-capitalist, he supported the far left party in French politics. All in all they really had little in common. Apart from the fact that they lived close



to each other, had known each other since childhood and had the same exam coming up, they had no strong personal affinities.

Vincent went on, “No really I am telling you, and you must at least realise it. Look around you! Do not you see all these multinational brands, firms and corporations, destroying our mode of life and in fact many local modes of life around the world? Soon we will all be the same from Paris to Beijing. All this, for what? Profit. You do not need to agree with me politically to see that it is happening before our very own eyes. See the farmers’ movement led by Jose Bové here in France? You have heard about him, right?”

“Yes, I remember he went to prison for setting a McDonalds on fire with a bunch of angry peasants<sup>1</sup>”, Thomas said with a smile.

“What I want to say is that you do not need to be like me to see this homogenisation process going on. Even the right wing parties have tried to do something about it<sup>2</sup>! But see no one in the mainstream parties, left or right wants to take decisive action against it. The only solution is to strive for another kind of globalisation. What is wrong with the current one, is that it is not aimed to make our lives better, or to take into account non-profit variables. It is just all about money”.

At this point Thomas sighed and thought that this was exactly why he and Vincent stopped hanging out with each other regularly years ago. What was he trying to do? Get me to sign up for the party? He could not stand politically oriented conversations like this, and saw little use in debating such things as abstract as cultural globalisation.

But Vincent kept on lecturing his classmate, “I mean look at yourself! At your friends! You are brainwashed by the global marketing firms into liking MTV music. You eat stuff that does not even taste good and will probably kill you and kill our planet. You dress up in clothes made by children in sweatshops in Bangladesh for 20 cents, sold to you for •150. And then you will probably end up throwing them away because some stupid actor and his entourage would have stopped wearing them”.

Thomas felt insulted, and he could no longer hide his exasperation with his high minded friend.

“And what, you think that you are NOT part of this? You do not think you are ‘culturally globalised’ too? Look at you! Baggy pants from I do not know where, shirt from some other part of the world, hairstyle from Jamaica! Oh yeah and after this are not you going for a yoga class? What an authentic Frenchman you make! You are more culturally globalised than I am!”

“I am not saying I am not globalised, or against cultural exchange, but against material culture and consumerism brought about by Western MNCs”, said Vincent defensively, guessing that he had gone too far in his critique of Thomas’ tastes and way of life.

Thomas said, “Yeah, well the Indian sari you bought for your girlfriend was probably brought here by an multinational company (MNC), whether you like it or not. Your African percussion CD is from the same record label as my R&B album. Without these companies Vincent, you probably would not even know that saris existed, or what African drums sounded like. And what was that social forum thing in Puerto Alegre you went to, that was organised over the Internet, and to which you went to on Air France?”

Vincent was amazed that his friend actually had something to say back! Usually he just lectured people like Thomas and threw facts and figures at them until they thought twice about what they were doing. But this time his convictions were actually shaken. Could it be that the current cultural globalisation process is not all about cultural homogenisation by big MNCs, and that he is quite ironically a proof of this?

***“The firm might be global, but business is always local.”***

“You are watching CNN India and this is primetime news”, clamoured the announcer.

After more than a day of travelling, John and Kim were finally settled in their hotel room in Bangalore. Both of them were exhausted after a long journey from San Francisco, where they lived and had started a business a few years ago. They were now here in Bangalore to negotiate a contract with an Indian firm. The first encounter was tomorrow. For now, however, watching the news and relaxing sounded like a good option.

The news show host announced the top story of the day, “The IPL<sup>3</sup> is now considering hosting the league in the UK or in South Africa after the decision that it would not be held in India during election time for security reasons. More on this from our reporter in Delhi...”.

“Well the Dow Jones just lost 300 points and the Treasury Secretary announced his plan to save Wall Street today but apparently cricket is more important. Thank you CNN India!” said John sarcastically.

“You know cricket is really big here. I used to share a room with an Indian in the first year of college and he would not stop talking about it”, remarked Kim.

John was puzzled, “That’s weird. I really thought of cricket as the sport of the British elite. You would think that it would have been associated with ‘colonisation’ in the minds of Indians, and therefore rejected after independence”.

“The Tata Nano is to be launched tomorrow in Mumbai. It will be the world’s cheapest car with a starting price of 1 lakh<sup>4</sup> rupees”, bellowed the TV. This was the second story of the night.

“It is really surprising how CNN in India really has nothing to do with our CNN at home. The news is not the same. The announcers are much more formal, less relaxed. Seems the global media is not that global after all”, John remarked.

“Well they do have to satisfy their audience. In the end it is about what Indian people want to watch. You have to adapt the product to the people you sell it too. Global firms have to localise their products”, answered Kim.

“Yes that makes sense. Even in our industry, the same video game is sometimes modified depending on where it is being sold”.

He flipped the channel to MTV India. An Indian version of a reality show that was popular in the US was on. John started thinking about what this meant for Indian culture, although he did not know much about it.

John said, “Do not you think that even if TV channels do localise their products, like MTV or CNN, each with programmes adapted to the cultural sensibilities of their audiences, the effect on the society is still one of Westernisation? It is not all about the product they sell, whether it’s localised or not, but also about the product’s effect on society, is not it?”

“Yeah I see what you are getting at. But do you think the Indian teenagers who watch this interpret it the same way as our kids do? I think that assuming this is going a step too far. You cannot expect different cultures to react in the same way”.

Kim and John decided to call it a day, and went off to sleep. They had to meet with the Indian counterpart the following day at 9AM. They were somewhat nervous, fearing a cultural “gaffe”. They did not come unprepared however; a US\$150 bottle of single malt whisky as a gift, and a rigorous presentation of their business plan.

At 4 PM the meeting was over. The two American business partners did not know what to think of their encounter with their potential Indian counterpart. First off, the whisky bottle was a complete flop.

“Did you see his face when we gave him the bottle? I think he was actually more embarrassed than anything”, said John.

“Yes, we really messed up this one. His secretary told me afterwards that he does not drink. I recall someone telling me that quite a few Indians are teetotallers”, explained Kim.

“What about the questions about our families? That was really awkward. What a bad way of starting a business meeting. It made me very uncomfortable from the start”

“Again I think that is probably how it goes here. I bet it is a usual way of initiating a business conversation”, said Kim trying to put things into perspective.

Then there was the pace of the meeting. It started late, and went on beyond the scheduled finish. The Indians focused on what Kim and John thought were only minor details of their presentation. All in all, although there were not really any big issues that emerged, they failed to sense much enthusiasm. The slow pace of the meeting added to this negative impression. Not knowing what to think, they decided to take a step back and relax for a while. Kim remarked,

“Did you notice that when we came in the secretary was burning incense and performing some kind of ritual in front of her computer?”

“Really?” said John.

“Yes. The HR told me later on that it was an ancient Hindu tradition of revering the instrument that one uses to make a living. It is still carried on in the cubicles of many companies in India today. He also told me ‘it keeps the staff happy’, but I saw that he too had incense sticks in front of his computer”.

“Funny!”

Both reflected on their short experience in Bangalore. They had not ventured outside their hotel rooms much. They had not come here to experience the local culture. They were not tourists here but businessmen. However, both were under the impression of having come across radically different cultural practices, even though their short stay in this foreign land took place in what are supposedly prime examples of cultural homogenisation – an international hotel room and a multinational corporation. A short encounter with the global media in India showed them that global firms have to redesign their products to the local audience's cultural particularities. Not only do they have to redesign their products, the way business is done within allegedly global firms also varies greatly. The frustration they experienced with their Indian business partner stemmed not from a divergence in interests, but from cultural mishaps. Even in global firms, culture still wields considerable influence.

## 3

*Christmas in Bangkok*

Mary and Jib were walking around in Bangkok in the middle of November in an unmistakably Christmassy atmosphere. Having read a lot about Thailand before visiting her local friend, Mary marvelled at the glittery decorations and expressed her surprise to Jib:

“Bangkok looks like a giant Christmas tree! All these multicoloured lights and candies everywhere! But how come you celebrate Christmas with so much fervour in a country that is 95 percent Buddhist?”

Jib thought for a second and replied, “We do not really celebrate Christmas you know, we just enjoy the atmosphere and merry family times and shared-love message associated with it. There is no religious significance for us. All the decorations you see have been there since October! We are meeting our friends Pi Tot and Pi Aum over at Siam Paragon, the huge mall you see in front of us. You will understand more about what Christmas is all about in Bangkok once we get there”.

Walking towards the entrance, Mary noticed an Asian featured Santa making a “*wai*”, the traditional Thai greeting gesture, at her. Added to the ambient warm 25 degree atmosphere, this confused Mary as of what to think of Christmas in Bangkok. Right behind Santa she notices Goofy and Snow White followed by one or two shy-looking dwarfs. Why on earth were Disney characters associated with Christmas celebrations? Although Christmas was unmistakably in the air, it was strangely out of sync with the Christmas atmosphere she was used to back at home. Yet despite the differences the atmosphere did feel somewhat Christmas like: people smiling, excited children and a general feeling of gaiety in the air.

They finally found their friends Tot and Aum on the esplanade. Mary could not help but share her reservations about a Thai Christmas.

Aum cheerfully explained, “You see, Christmas here is associated with love and happy times, like Disney. That is why you saw Disney characters along with Santa. It is more of a reason to have fun in a friendly atmosphere than the celebration of the birth of Christ. In fact most people do not even associate Christmas time with the birth of Jesus; some don’t even know it is related!!”

“Some people do not even know about Jesus!” Jib added.

As they walked around, eating some red and green sticky rice with mango, Mary observed, “Do not you think the significance is hollow then? I do not mean this in a disrespectful way, but for us it is a time of spirituality as well as a friendly atmosphere”.

Tot seemed thoughtful for a while and shared his reflections, “Is it really? I feel that in most western countries, Christmas season also starts the day after Halloween and many non religious people also celebrate it.”

“Yes you are right, but still, in most western countries the majority of people are Christians, which makes it natural to celebrate Christmas in a country wide manner. Do you see what I mean?” said Mary.

“Yes of course. But really, I think that if you come back here at another time of the year you would understand straight away why we love Christmas. Lights and decorations abound in trees of restaurants and hotels all year round. If you notice, girls often wear glittery or colourful hair accessories or jewellery. The point is that we enjoy colours and glitter as well as good food and occasions to have fun. Christmas relates to all of these characteristics from Thailand and is a perfect excuse for us to put all these things we like together. Spirituality is also extremely important in Thailand, although of course it is expressed through Buddhism. So you will find that although people cannot relate religiously to Christmas, they will still relate to the most important message: family time, fun and frolic”.

Jib jumped in, “Thai people like to celebrate and celebrate together and that is mainly why people identify with Christmas. It is also really as simple as that. For example, here we celebrate the New Year three times – the Western New year on January 01, the Chinese New Year and the Buddhist one as well!”



Mary was starting to get the picture, “It makes more sense now. How is it in the rest of Thailand though? Do they put up special decorations; sing Christmas carols all day and dress as Santa?”

Coming from Northern Thailand, Aum explained, “Well of course it is not like in Bangkok. But yes, people do celebrate Christmas time all over Thailand. Tourism and the big expatriate community have definitely played a role in introducing Christmas in Thailand. But local people do create a merry holiday atmosphere by themselves; in villages for instance”.

“I see. So it is really quite embedded in the Thai culture, way of life and beliefs now. That is quite interesting!” said Mary enthusiastically.

Tot could not help but mention that the picture was more complicated than it seemed, “Yes. But the picture is not all rosy of course. There is a great social divide in this country. You will notice that the middle class is quite small. We will drive in front of some famous luxury hotel on the way to Pam’s place, you will understand”.

Driving around, they went all the way to the Peninsula Hotel, on the river front. An enormous Christmas tree was set at the door.

Tot went further and tried to explain: “You see this Christmas tree? It is real, not like most fake ones around the city. It has been imported straight from Canada especially for the occasion. This gives you an idea of what services and extravagances are available to the wealthy here. The mall we were at, Siam Paragon, is a luxury mall, with all designer brands from Europe and the US. Only a small percentage of the population can afford to shop in these stores, and yet they exist. The idea of giving each other gifts mainly travelled from upper classes, from people travelling and being educated abroad. You can see that the poorest people, who are numerous, do not have access to these malls, restaurants and luxury hotels”.

Aum added, “Consumerism and material possessions associated with the commercial side of Christmas are far from any Buddhist value”.

“Wait! So Christmas is both supportive of Buddhist values and spirituality and conflicting with these?” enquired Mary.

Aum said, “Exactly. Christmas does not come from Buddhism, but from foreign traditions. It has been adopted in Thailand as part of the local culture and transformed to suit local needs, wishes and traditions. But, of course, it remains closely linked to commercial selling and profit making”.

Mary thought that Thai Christmas was perhaps not what she was used to at home, but that it was fun to see a new kind of Christmas. After all, as long as the spirit is there, the different cultural setting is just another source of excitement.

## 4

## *McDonaldisation or Cultural Appropriation?*

*“People often use foreign goods and ideas to become more like themselves”*

Dmitry and Brendan, two friends that had met in college, were sitting down at a busy McDonalds enjoying a “fan-tastic” burger, one of the many items sold only in McDonalds in Hong Kong. They were here for an internship they found through their American university. Brendan’s parents were from Hong Kong, but he had grown up in the US, although he made frequent trips back. Dmitry was originally from Russia – his parents had migrated to the US at about the same time Brendan’s parents had. They were both “second generation” immigrants in the US, but from altogether different backgrounds.

Brendan did speak Cantonese, a skill to which his parents had attached great importance. It had not been easy to learn it solely through private lessons on weekends, but he was now glad that his parents persuaded him to acquire this ability. It did come in handy whenever he went back. It was a great plus on his CV as well.

“I am going to get myself another burger. I think I will go for a Big Mac this time. Do you want anything else?” said Dmitry.

“No thanks, I will be OK. Need any help with the ordering?” enquired Brendan.

“Do not worry; I think I can handle it”

Five minutes later Dmitry was back with his burger.

“It is incredible how rude the guys at the counter are. Not a smile, nothing. It looks like they are actually mad at you for ordering something”, he said looking back at the counter.

Brendan thought about what his friend had just said. It is true, he thought, “service with a smile” definitively is not the norm at McDonald’s in Honk Kong, unlike in North America, where the management is keen on making the clients feel welcome through a seemingly friendly personnel. But somehow it was not that personnel in Honk Kong were inherently rude, or that they did not care about the image given to the client.

He tried to explain, “You know, I think that a smile here would not give the right impression to the client. If I bought something from a street vendor here and he was smiling, I would know I was getting ripped off”.

“Maybe, but come on – the guy was frowning as I was placing my order. I am not asking for so much as a smile, not frowning would be a good start”.

“Well it is not about frowning or not. It is also about giving the impression of taking your job seriously, being focused and committed”, he added, “I guess here competence, seriousness and directness are much more valued than ‘friendliness’, in customer-employee relationship of course. So that is how you should interpret the lack of warmth and the frown”.

Dmitri nodded his head and kept on eating.

After a while he said, “You know it is funny – about the smiling thing – after communism collapsed in Russia, a few Mc Donald’s soon opened in Moscow”.

He continued, “Well, my parents told me that when we went back there to visit relatives in 1992, and I actually remember it, they took me to Mc Donald’s after a few days because I was having a hard time adjusting to the local food. Well they had an employee outside the restaurant with a loudspeaker telling people “If we smile at you it is not because we are making fun of you, but because we are happy to serve you”.

Brendan laughed, “After decades of communism I guess people were not used to employees caring for their client’s well being anymore”.

Dmitri added, “Yes, that and the fact that smiling can be seen as a provocation in Russia, it is not always interpreted as a friendly gesture”.

Dmitri thought about the book he had read on the way to Honk Kong “*The McDonaldisation of Society*”. In it the author offered a gloomy picture of the future, in which the principles of Mc Donald’s production and consumption model would soon pervade every society and bring the world towards a single, homogenised culture where consumerism erased local indigenous cultures.

“Have you ever read the book I was reading on the plane here, *The McDonaldisation of Society* by Ritzer?” asked Dmitri.

“No, I have heard about it though. I have also heard of “Cocacolonisation” in a newspaper article. I am not a big fan of such theories. I think their success has more to do with the catchiness of their labels and their simplicity, rather than their ability to describe what is actually going on”.

Dmitri thought for a second about the conversation they just had about the employee’s attitude and the book he had read on the plane.

He said, “The smiling we were just discussing, and how it is interpreted differently in different countries, I think that could be a good counter example to the argument that multinationals like McDonald’s and Coca Cola spread a typically American way of life in the world, trampling local cultures. It could be argued that local culture in Hong Kong had prevailed over McDonald’s principle of service with a smile”.

Brendan nodded in approval, “You are right. Coca Cola could be another example. It is used as a remedy in combination with traditional medicine in the countryside of mainland China. It is drunk warm, with all kinds of herbs and roots in it. The local culture has appropriated and transformed what these western academics see as a tool of cultural imperialism. See the problem with McDonaldisation and all these theories is that they underestimate the resilience of local cultures, and the ability they have to incorporate foreign influences within their belief and value systems”.

The two friends sat in silence for a while. Being second generation immigrants to the US both had strong feelings regarding their cultural identities. They surely felt American, but did not want to forget their roots, where they originally came from etc. To them, the theory of cultural imperialism made little sense for they could pinpoint exactly how their homelands took what were supposedly Western ideas and practices and modified them in subtle but profound ways. They thought that to expect a given people to use a good or interpret an idea in the same way as it was done in America was a mistake. But they also thought that the pundits decrying the loss of culture in their respective homelands did not actually know much about the ways of the West, and could therefore not grasp the subtlety of the appropriation process.

“So are you ready for mainland China next week?” said Brendan referring to the trip they planned once their internship was finished.

“I guess so”, replied Dmitri, “Do you know your way around Beijing well enough so that we do not get totally lost when we visit?”

“Yes, more or less. I have been there four times, I know the basics. You know what? We’ll go to the McDonald’s on *Tiananmen Square* if you want. It is really funny to see the golden arches there, in many ways it is quite symbolic of China nowadays – still communist in theory, but open economically. So much so that what many see as the archetype of global capitalism is now proudly serving hamburgers in a place that is so full of history for communist China”.

“Wow, yes I would love to go, why not, although going to McDonald’s as a tourist sounds kind of odd”.

“I know! Do not worry; we’ll just stop there for lunch, but trust me it has become a kind of tourist hot-spot both for foreign and rural Chinese people who come to visit the capital. You’ll see it is also quite amusing to see how Chinese people have ‘Chinesed’ Mc Donalds<sup>5</sup>”.

Dmitri’s curiosity was aroused, “How so?”

“Well, the first thing you will see is that they just hang out there. They have taken the ‘fast’ out of ‘fast food’, and turned the whole place into a leisure area. You will see elderly women having a chat for hours sipping on tea in the afternoon. Another thing, which is less true nowadays, but that was very obvious the first time my parents took me

there, when I was around 10 or 12, was that eating at McDonald's was a social statement in Beijing".

"What do you mean?"

Brendan continued, "Well at that time eating there was very expensive for most people. So what you and I refer to as fast food was actually *haute* cuisine in the minds of a lot of customers. I think this has probably changed somewhat for a lot of people as standards of living have gone up".

"Yes I remember it was the same in Moscow in the mid 1990s. When me and my cousins used to go to Mc Donald's because we were tired of our grandma's food people looked at us in despise, because we were obviously from a well off family".

Brendan added, "The other thing is that many Chinese people like the fact that the different items on the menu are similarly priced".

"Why?"

"Well, traditional Chinese banquets are extremely competitive. If someone next to you orders a dish that is more expensive than what you are offering your guests, that is a huge loss of face. And a big embarrassment too. So in that sense McDonald's enables people to get over this very Chinese dilemma".

"Ha! McDonald's helping to overcome social injustice! American capitalism promoting social equality. How deeply ironic. If only Mao knew..." said Dmitri laughing. He paused, and went on, "So wait – are you saying that in China, and Hong Kong the reasons for McDonald's success is not that it serves fast and cheap food?"

"No, not really. Plenty of other options existed for 'fast food' in China before McDonald's, just like here in Hong Kong. The reasons for McDonald's success here are definitely not the same as those in the West".

Brendan went further in his reasoning, "I actually read a column in a Beijing newspaper last summer in which the reporter stated that one of the reasons McDonald's was so successful in the US was because it

promoted social equality. This is obviously wrong; no one in the US goes to McDonald's because it treats everyone equally. But it shows that people are very prone to projecting their cultural frame of mind unto other cultures. And this leads to wrong, ethnocentric interpretations".

With the example of Mc Donald's in mind, Dmitri was starting to realise how the book he had read on the way here had got the whole issue of cultural loss and homogenisation wrong. Local cultures had resisted, shaped and remoulded even the most iconic institution of American capitalism: the golden arches and their friendly red nosed companion, Ronald. His mind travelled back to many other examples of this cultural appropriation process from his summer vacations in Russia.



## *The Myth of Cultural Purity*

Christian was desperate. He hated the countryside. He hated the little village in which his grandparents had bought a house so that “the family could get together in the summer”. He hated the old dusty house itself, and right now he hated his parents for making him go to this dreaded place every summer. He knew that he had no choice, so there he was sitting silently in the back of the family van, head against the window.

“We are almost there!” said his father

“Great!”, mumbled Christian, “Two weeks of pure boredom!”

Thirty minutes later the whole family got off the car. The rest of the relatives were already there; the uncles, the great uncles, the aunts, the little cousins, gathering outside to greet them. After having said hello to everyone and put his luggage in the room he was sharing with his younger cousins, it was time to go into the garden to enjoy a late afternoon drink. This was actually his favourite activity in the family house; at least it did not involve walks through the countryside or visiting local farms.

“Come my boy, sit here next to me!” said his grandfather.

The grandson took a chair and sat next to his grandfather, a tall, healthy, vigorous man. He had grown up in the countryside not far from where they were now, although he had enrolled himself in the navy at 18, with the desire of exploring the world. And he had. He always told stories about faraway lands he travelled to while in the navy.

“Why the sad face? Do not tell me that you are out here while your friends are having fun together!” asked the grandfather.

“Well, it is just that... I was supposed to go to the beach with them and...” tried to explain Christian, without offending his grandfather.

“Does your father have no heart?! Making my grandson miss out on the beach trip with his friends to come to the middle of nowhere!” said the grandfather jokingly, “Do not worry; there will be plenty of other opportunities for you to go on trips with your friends. And while you are out here you can enjoy the healthy air of the countryside, the charming ways of the people here; a good dose of true France!”

Christian chuckled. He knew his grandfather had guessed that he was not really excited about coming here, but that he understood him.

“How are you my nephew?” said his aunt.

“I am fine thank you”, replied Christian

Josephine was Christian’s aunt, a French teacher in a suburban high school. Christian could not stand her. She acted in high minded ways, and always found something to criticise. She was also struck by what Christian called the “it was better before syndrome”. This syndrome manifested itself, according to Christian, through several symptoms. Nostalgia, pessimism, fears of the future, and a romantic, idealistic view of the past.

Josephine, using the tone of voice that Christian hated so much, said, “Maybe this little stay in the countryside will do you some good Christian. Getting out of the city is good sometimes. Here, you can really feel the authenticity of people, of the culture. Not like in Paris, where you do not even know if you are in Paris or in Tokyo anymore”.

“Have you ever been to Tokyo, Aunt Josephine?” asked Christian sarcastically.

She did not bother to reply, and Christian’s mom did not look very happy with her son’s manners.

Instead, she went on, “No, really, I am shocked by the way teenagers are completely letting go of our good ways and culture. Take language for example. Do you know how many spelling mistakes and how many English words I find in my students’ work every day? If it keeps on

going this way, one day our own kids will not know how to speak proper French anymore!”

“It is true that every time I hear Christian and his friends talking I barely understand what they’re saying!” said Christian’s mom.

The aunt went on, as if she was in a classroom, “But you know it’s not confined to language. In fact that’s just a facet of how our culture, one of our dearest possessions, is getting tarnished and perverted by foreign television shows, movies, music... I am telling you that 20 years from now, French culture will only survive as a recollection in old people’s minds”.

“Yes, it was better before”, said Christian sarcastically.

“Well at least before we had Rousseau, Monet, Hugo... Now what?” said Josephine with an air of despair.

“Do not you think it’s a fast conclusion to blame the lack of likeable writers and painters on foreign influence?” asked Christian defiantly.

“No, it is perfectly logical. Thank God that our government has been taking action on this point. But I don’t think they are doing enough”, answered the aunt categorically.

“What actions are you talking about?” enquired Christian’s Mom.

“Do not you read the papers? We stood strong and firm to the US in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to keep the right to protect our cultural industry. Sometimes profits have to give way to more important things. But I think it is a hopeless fight; we will not be able to change what people like. And they like trash TV, Hollywood, Harry Potter, fast food... No one goes to museums on the weekends anymore”.

The whole family was now listening to her. It was not the first time that they had heard such an alarmist discourse about the disappearance of French culture because of foreign (and especially US) cultural influence. But Josephine was really emotional when she talked about it. Christian felt that this was a good opportunity to confront his aunt’s views.

He said, “I do not know, I think I’m not as pessimistic as you are. There are plenty of ways in which cultural exchanges and foreign influences are beneficial to our culture. It is pointless to try to keep our culture free from external influence, whether American or Japanese. Pointless and dangerous for the vitality of our own literature, cinema and music”.

“Our cinema? How can you say that? The only thing young people want to watch nowadays are those god awful Hollywood productions! Same for music!” said Josephine.

Christian replied defiantly, “Well, Aunt Josephine, since you are always taking the past as a reference for excellence, do you know that Jean Renoir, perhaps one of the best French directors in the history of French cinema, loved Hollywood movies? He said that he only watched American movies, and that he despised French cinema. I do not think he would have agreed with you that American cultural influence is necessarily bad for our film industry, let alone culture”.

“Well just because Renoir did not like French movies does not counter my argument”

“No, but the fact that many of the most famous French directors did draw inspiration from America’s Hollywood does. Yet, you would be the first one to herald their movies as true, classic, uncorrupted French cinema”.

“Ok you two stop philosophising and take a drink. We are here to relax!” said the grandmother.

The evening went on as usual – family dinner, then TV for the kids as the adults chatted outside. At around 11:30 almost everyone had gone to bed, except for Christian and his Grandfather.

“You know my boy, what you said earlier on is true. There is no such thing as a culture free from outside influence”, said the elder.

“You think so?”

“Yes. Look at Spain. Have you ever been to Andalusia?”

“No, never”.

The grandfather explained, “Well, as you know, a big part of Spain was under Muslim rule for almost a thousand years. Some of Spain’s most beautiful historical monuments are old mosques, sometimes reconverted into churches. Traditional Spanish architecture has been widely impacted by Muslims. Yet, it is not considered less Spanish for that reason”.

“I see”.

“And you know, what is even more spectacular? Later, when the Spaniards colonised Latin America, they still carried with them some elements of Islamic architecture. Imagine, a Mayan architect building an Arabic style house in Mexico City! But of course, at every stage of the process, each culture added modifications and interpretations to the designs”.

“So you are saying that it did not end up losing its Spanish identity?”

“Yes, just like American influence on French cinema, Muslim influence did not weaken Spanish or Latin American culture. The opposite is true in fact”, said the grandfather with a smile.

The elder took a sip of wine, paused and went on, “What I am afraid of”, he said, “is that, as you pointed out, by trying to shield ourselves from supposedly negative foreign influence in order to protect our cultural heritage, we’ll actually end up hurting the vitality of French culture”.

“I know what you mean. All these people fail to see that culture is not just an art piece that was made 400 years ago. Aunt Josephine always talks about past poets, paintings kept in museums for hundreds of years. She despises new things that depart from her archaic conception of art. And thus she depicts anything new as an impoverishment of culture”.

The elder smiled, “She is not the only one to speak of culture as some ancient mummy to be kept from open air and light at the risk of complete disintegration. Many people agree with this view. And it leads them to reject new, beneficial and enriching elements from outside”.

Christian looked at the stars in the sky, and he and his grandfather stayed silent for a little while. His grandfather lighted up his pipe, and inhaled the smoke.

“So do you think that all this talk of cultural globalisation misses the point that this process has been going on for thousands of years and that it is perhaps not that new?” asked Christian.

“Exactly! And most of the time, it has been a tremendous source of invention and progress. Our current numbering system is a good example. It is of Indian and Arabic origin, and replaced the much less sophisticated Roman numbering system. Alright, enough for tonight, let’s go to bed now!”

## 6

*A Two Way Street*

Michael and Victoria had just gotten to Guatemala three days ago. After landing in Guatemala City, they took a bus along with other tourists to the town of Chichicastenango, renowned for its vibrant Maya K'iche culture. Finally they thought, they were going to see the traditional Mayan lifestyle, uncorrupted by modernisation and the west. The desire to witness a lifestyle that had not changed much throughout the centuries, and retained elements of the Mayan past, was a key reason for their travel to Guatemala. And they were getting closer to this goal by the minute now. Half an hour later, the bus was stopping. Here they were, in the town of Chichicastenango, and they were very excited. The guide told them to drop their baggage at the hotel. They were to meet outside the hotel in an hour.

“Ok everyone here?” yelled the guide with a strong Spanish accent.

“Yes”, responded the group uniformly.

“So first we’re going to go to the market, follow me!”

After having spent twenty minutes wandering through the market, Victoria and Michael shared their thoughts. They were a little bothered.

Victoria said, “Even here you can clearly see the traditional culture eroding. What a shame!”

“Yes I know, did you see how many women do not wear the traditional dress anymore? How most people here have a cell phone! I’m shocked. These poor people are being robbed off their culture”, replied Michael.

“Okay now, let us go and see how these traditional dresses are made”, said the guide.

They walked through the town for a little while, and Michael and Christina's fears were confirmed. They talked about it with a few other tourists as well. Televisions, western clothing, cell phones... Horror! Lack of authenticity, cultural loss, consumerism – all had diagnosed the alleged ills of globalisation.

The guide spoke again, "So here we are. This is Maria, and she makes these dresses all day using this tread mill. You can even give it a try yourself; just ask her she will show you how it is done".

The couple's curiosity was aroused. They gave it a try and realised how much effort it demanded.

"Does not it sadden her that many women here do not wear these dresses anymore?" asked Christina to the guide.

"You know, I am from here and I can tell you why more and more women do not buy these dresses anymore. It is that these have become too expensive", explained the guide.

"Really?" asked Victoria.

"Well yes! You Americans and Europeans are so fond of them that we have actually started exporting them, like other K'iche handicrafts. So obviously the prices have shot up. And see Maria's not that sad about that, to her that means more money. She can buy medicine for her kids, better food, and so on".

Victoria went to her husband and told him what the guide had explained to her. All of a sudden, both of them were struck by a slight feeling of guilt. The lack of authenticity that annoyed them earlier was actually due to people getting richer.

The guide saw the two of them talking and got closer, "You know, said the guide, K'iche culture had to go through a lot. When the Spanish came, they did everything they could to make us more like Europeans. They broke up the traditional family structure, forced people to move into artificial towns and convert to Catholicism. Not to mention the epidemics brought by the Europeans that swept through the land and decimated entire villages! And yet, we are still very much K'iche people. I think our culture will survive globalisation".



“You said to my wife that if women did not wear these dresses anymore, it was because you have started exporting these and therefore, these have become too expensive, right?” Michael asked, wanting to know more.

“Right”.

“Then do you think that if they get richer they will start wearing them again?”

“Yes, without a doubt. Why would not they? It is not that they do not like them anymore trust me. And if we keep on selling as much traditional handicraft to the outside world as we do now, I am sure that the incomes of most people here will rise. In fact handicrafts and cultural exports have gained the attention of many developmental agencies around the world”.

“Then you believe that by opening yourself to the outside world you could actually strengthen and revive your local traditions and crafts?” he asked.

“Very much so. And eliminate poverty. Perhaps enhance women’s position in society as well. All this could be very beneficial to our society and culture. And to yours! Perhaps some American artist will be influenced by K’iche artwork he sees in a store, who knows?”

The couple went back to observe the women weaving and treading the dress. They thought to themselves that maybe globalisation would not end up trampling K’iche culture in the end. Could it actually strengthen it? And help extricate people out of poverty? The guide’s last remark also struck Victoria. She had always thought about cultural globalisation mainly as a one way process, West-East, North-South. But maybe it was not so, and that she had just focused on one way of the relation that is more of a two way street.

Father Umberto got on the boat that was leading him back to Spain. After a year long stay in Mexico, he was rejoicing at the thought of going back to Seville, although as a member of the Holy inquisition, he could not overtly display his inner joy.

He had been here on a mission of the highest importance. Rumours of corruption of the doctrine of the Church had reached his superiors before his departure. “Indian paganism was tarnishing the Holy Church’s teachings and beliefs, and endangering the successful conversion of heathens in the new world”. Those were the words written in the letter that he had received from the Vatican; his mission was to report on these alleged deviances.

Paganism had to be erased from the new world, rooted out of Indian souls. How could this be successful if pagan beliefs and practices, the devil’s work, infiltrated local churches? The report he was preparing for his superiors was a recollection of all the abnormalities, all the impurities he had observed. And there were many.

It started off like this: “In spite of the gigantic efforts the Holy Church has put into converting the Indians into proper Christians, and thereby saving their souls, it appears that they have not yet shed the entirety of their pagan beliefs and practices. The most troubling thing is that many of these poor souls are convinced that they are fully Christian.”

He then went on to list all the examples he had seen of this; “As the governor of a locality outside Mexico City greeted me, he proudly showed me his mansion. It was built in Spanish architectural style and had fresco paintings. The scenes depicted all had some religious overtones. He proudly claimed that Indian artisans had painted it, and seemed very proud that savages had, under his training and supervision, mimicked Spanish art. I was very impressed

at first, but on closer observation I found atrocious corruptions that the painters had subtly introduced. Snakes and monkeys; pagan gods, stood in a corner. Some apparently benign patterns were in fact similar to the ones I saw on now forbidden pagan sacred paintings; maze for example”.

He stopped and thought for awhile. And then continued, “The same happened in some churches I saw in more or less remote localities; the same indigenous, non-Christian, paintings on the walls of places of worship. As I was outraged at such scenes, the local priests, sometimes Indians themselves, sometimes adopted an apologetic discourse. They said that in order to convert these people, they had to let them identify with the abstract notions of the Holy Gospel by drawing links with their previous religions. It seems that some Holy men are to blame for the decadence of the Church in the new world”.

After a recollection of various examples of wall paintings he encountered throughout this journey, he decided it was time to tackle what he thought was the most shocking and horrible distortion of Christianity he saw, “You might have heard of the so called miraculous appearance of the Virgin’s image on a peasant’s cloak in New Spain. This ‘Virgin of Guadalupe’ as it is called here, is nothing less than pure heresy. My conversations with several Dominican priests who agree with me convinced me of this. It should be made clear that the grounds on which this apparition is supposed to have taken place are ancient worship grounds for Indians. This is not a coincidence. It is also widely known here that many locals call this virgin ‘Tonatzin’, a pagan goddess.

Furthermore, it seems that the devotion to the Lady is akin to the worship of a goddess rather than of the mother of Jesus. This amalgamation is revolting and worrisome. The worship of this so called ‘Virgin of Guadalupe’ is so widespread and popular here that one wonders whether the newly converted Indians have not found a way of defying the Church of Spain’s orthodox doctrine.”

He looked at the flickering candle light on his desk, and continued; “I fear that these signs of corruption and deviance from orthodoxy are clues that indigenous people, though apparently superficially embracing the teachings of the church, are unconsciously engaged in resistance against our attempts at ridding them of their past beliefs. They are engaging in acts of cultural resistance.”

Three friends sat around a table at the local café in Delhi, sipping their *chai* lattes and iced teas. They were looking out of the window waiting for the fourth friend to join. They saw their friend dressed in a *salwar kameez*, awkwardly trying to dodge the cow, the cycle rickshaws, the autos, cars and the motorbikes to get across the road to safety. She finally jumped onto the pavement, only to be pounced upon by a small beggar child, indicating he wanted something to eat. She handed him a five rupee coin, and then noticed at the corner of her eye several children running towards her. She ran to the door of the café, almost bumping into two ladies who had their heads covered by their *sarees*. “Hurry up!” she heard a man growl and turned her head to see two men beckoning to the same ladies. “Probably their husbands”, thought Nitya. She entered the café, safely shutting the door behind her. The sweat on her forehead and the back of her neck was quickly evaporating thanks to the ice cold air conditioning.

“You look very Indian in that *salwar kameez*, Nitya!”

“I am Indian Gina! Plus it’s cooler than wearing jeans in that blistering heat”, replied Nitya in an unmistakably British accent.

“I hate wearing *salwar kameez*...it is such a fussy outfit! I prefer jeans but I guess that’s because I’m used to the heat”, chimed in Deepti.

“Sit down Nitya. You will have an iced chocolate right?” asked Bharti.

Nitya smiled. “You know me too well, *Masi*.<sup>6</sup>”

Nitya was in India to attend two weddings – her *Masi*’s and her friend Deepti’s. This was her second time in India, the first being when she was a toddler. Her interest in Bollywood movies kept her in touch with the language and with

being Indian, and so far her first week in India had been full of shopping and meeting family she had never met before. Her Masi's wedding was going to be a small affair, just a few close family and friends – it was the way Bharti always wanted it. She wanted no part in the traditional grand North Indian weddings that were mostly grand to show relatives and family members from the other side how well off one was. Bharti was in her mid-fifties and had never been married, something which is almost unheard of in India. She was a public relations guru and had worked for several multinational corporations and had seen most of the world – both through work and through her own passion for travel. Although she had seen so much of the world, living anywhere except India never appealed to her. She led a comfortable life and earned more than she could use, why would she move anywhere else?

“I cannot wait to move to Singapore! This time next week I will be flying out of India to start a new life...I cannot wait!” exclaimed Deepti.

“I cannot believe you are getting married to someone you hardly know Deepti”, said Nitya.

“I cannot believe you are getting married full stop. Why on earth would you want to forsake your independence?” asked Gina, the 34 year old social entrepreneur.

“My parents would never accept it if I said I didn't want to get married, Gina. Not everyone has a supportive family when it comes to these things in India”, replied Deepti.

“Yeah I know”, admitted Gina. “I think it is just the social stigma attached to an unmarried woman. Indian movies and television serials do not help the cause either. Every relationship in a movie has to end in a marriage. And in the television serials, all they show are marriages!”

“You think that is unrealistic...how about when they show women decked up in the finest sarees and gold? *Everyone* is a tee-totaller. It is all about joint families, young people getting married after completing their education and having a couple of years work experience, issues between mother-in-laws and daughter-in-laws, property issues between brothers and what not!” scoffed Bharti.

“But from what I have seen and heard, these are not unrealistic”, observed Nitya. Deepti and her fiancé represent the young people you

mentioned, and so many families live as joint families and face these 'mother-in-law and daughter-in-law issues'. People like Masi and you, Gina who have the choice to do what you please are in the minority in this country. How many times have people asked you why you are not married? And Masi, how many people shake their head in disbelief when you tell them that you are getting married for the first time in your fifties? There are still young women and men for that matter who cannot freely choose their professions, partners etc. There are women out there belonging to the ever expanding Indian middle class who are housewives and only have had some education in order to get a good husband. These are all realities that most Indians face”.

“I agree”, said Deepti. “There is a small population that has been influenced by the Western notion of independence, and lead fairly – what people here would consider – ‘modern’ lives, like Bharti and Gina. And then there are the in-betweens. People like me who get an education, work for a couple of years, lead a relatively independent life, and then finally settle down with a partner that the family approves of, bear children and rear them full time. But then there are others who are rather sheltered. They study what their parents want them to study, choose a profession that will earn them society’s “respect”, they are not really free to mingle with friends from the opposite sex, they do not drink or smoke, a lot of them are strict vegetarians, and they just basically do everything according to the norms and traditions of their families. They cannot choose their partners, and even the partners that are chosen by the parents have to come from the same caste. They face so many restrictions. And the people that I have talked about live in the bigger and semi-urban cities around the country. We have not even started describing the lives of people in rural areas who have been relatively untouched by the Western concept of independence”.

They all sat back and reflected on the conversation they had just had. Globalisation had had an effect on the country. MNCs were replacing traditional family businesses; multiplexes were replacing the large buildings sporting a lonesome theatre; malls were replacing the traditional crowded road side markets and shops; and well lit cafes were replacing dingy roadside tea stalls. Young people in the big cities were leading largely independent lives – undertaking part-time jobs, going to malls, pubs, clubs, bowling alleys etc. in their free time. They would be aware of the latest movies and music because they have the Internet.

And yet these people were far from being in the majority. There were also young people in these big cities and semi-urban cities that were leading semi-independent lives. Undertaking part time jobs was probably out of the question because their parents wanted them to focus wholly on their studies. Going to malls was probably one of the major pastimes. Going to pubs and clubs was probably not on the agenda, because their parents would dismiss this as a western infringement on the Indian culture. They would have arranged marriages and have families and pass the same teachings and ways of life onto their next generations.

The people in the rural areas were even more far removed from these Western concepts of leisure, recreation and independence. To them, earning a livelihood would be of supreme importance. They probably would not have time for these things even if they were exposed to the same 'modernisation'. They would have strict arranged marriages, with dowry playing an important part in the choice of partner, and they probably would not even know a word of English. All these different types of people were exposed to different things around the country. Indian culture was very much alive in all parts of the country, just in different ways and to varying degrees. Globalisation had not wiped out Indian culture – the rich Indian culture had just adapted itself to the changes it was being exposed to.

## *Epilogue*

**T**his volume is a collection of essays which demonstrate the invalidity of the usual stereotype of globalisation as a force driven purely by economic motives through which one culture annihilates the other.

Rather globalisation comes out as a constructive force through which resilient cultures and their components – language, food, art, etc – derive strength from each other and adjust themselves to changing environments and needs. The essays demonstrate the ability of all cultures to resist capture by others – in other words, the tendency is towards greater variety in culture rather than homogenisation.

Moreover, this discourse establishes that globalisation is not a new phenomenon and its history is as old as that of human travel and communication. However, it is only in recent times that this phenomenon has captured the attention of the international intelligentsia as technology has enhanced both the pace and ease of travel and communication.



## Endnotes

- 1 Jose Bove is a charismatic Frenchman popular in the countryside amongst farmers and anti-globalisation activists. He is a leading advocate for the return to local agriculture, for the protection of local culture, and a vehement “alter-mondialist”. He has become a leading figure of the alter-globalisation movement through dramatic actions such as the destruction of McDonalds and of genetically modified crops. A similar personality in the developing world is the Indian, M D Nanjundaswamy, President of the *Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangh*, an organisation which fights for the rights of farmers in Karnataka, the Southern Indian state in which the city of Bangalore is located. On January 31, 1996 he led a mob of a hundred followers to wreck the newly opened *Kentucky Fried Chicken* (KFC) outlet in Bangalore. The attack reflected their stand that fast food outlets such as KFC are associated with the use of scarce food grains for large scale food meat production rather than for feeding the poor. (<http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?200800>)
- 2 France is famous for its policy of “cultural protectionism” which is widely consensual along the political spectrum. It has taken the form of establishing movie quotas for local films in cinemas, or imposing a minimum time of French songs per hour on the radio.
- 3 IPL stands for Indian Premier League and is a cricket competition in which highly paid international cricketers turn out for teams representing major Indian cities”.
- 4 A lakh is hundred thousand, while a crore is 100 lakhs or ten million.
- 5 In India, where there are several options for fast food, McDonalds has started offering burgers with potato patties, which are not available elsewhere in the world. They also do not sell beef burgers as consumption of beef is taboo in Hindu culture. Hindus constitute around 80 percent of the total Indian population.
- 6 *Masi* in Hindi is what one would call one’s mother’s sister. There’s another word for father’s sister – *Bua*. These are the words you use to differentiate which aunt you are referring to. The Indian language is so refined.



**CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment**

D-217, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park, Jaipur 302 016, India

Ph: 91-141-228 2821, Fx: 91-141-228 2485

Email: [citee@cuts.org](mailto:citee@cuts.org) Website: [www.cuts-international.org](http://www.cuts-international.org), [www.cuts-citee.org](http://www.cuts-citee.org)