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Re-imagining South Asian Regional Identities: An Application of Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory

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Abstract

Debates on South Asian regional identities have often been polarized between structuralist explanations that privilege colonial legacies, state policies, and geopolitical frameworks, and culturalist approaches that emphasize ethnicity, religion, and everyday practices. Such dichotomies tend to reduce identity either to imposed structures or to individual agency, leaving little room to understand how both interact in practice. This paper reimagines South Asian regional identities through the lens of Anthony Giddens' structuration theory, which foregrounds the duality of structure and agency. Drawing on this framework, it argues that regional identities in South Asia are neither static inheritances nor wholly autonomous expressions, but are dynamically produced and reproduced through the continuous interplay of institutions, historical legacies, and lived practices. The application of structuration theory highlights the hybrid, processual, and relational character of South Asian identities, demonstrating how communities negotiate borders, resist hegemonies, and create new cultural formations within enduring structural constraints. The paper's unique contribution lies in bridging identity politics with structuration theory, offering an alternative to essentialist and state-centric accounts that dominate South Asian studies. By conceptualizing identity as an ongoing process rather than a fixed category, the analysis opens space for more nuanced understandings of belonging, citizenship, and regional cooperation in a context marked by both fragmentation and interdependence.

Keywords

Anthony Giddens, Structuration theory, South Asian Studies, Regional identity, Diaspora.

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1. Introduction

South Asia comprises India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and the Maldives-collectively known as the South Asian countries. They all share a similar colonial history but not necessarily other markers of national identity such as the precolonial past, languages, religion, and region. Language and culture play a significant role in shaping the history of nations, and at the same time, they are shaped by the changes occurring within those nations. In the contemporary world, regional identities are no longer tied exclusively to physical territory but have become fluid and mobile, extending across borders through the forces of globalization, migration, and digital communication. These processes are not only redefining South Asian identities but also influencing cultures worldwide, reaching even the most distant corners of the globe.

South Asian countries are extraordinarily rich in linguistic diversity, and this diversity takes different forms across national contexts. Beginning with India, the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution lists 22 officially recognized languages, including Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, and Urdu, among others. Hindi, written in the Devanagari script, is the official language of the Union, while English serves as an associate official language. Individual states possess the authority to adopt their own official languages. India's linguistic landscape encompasses four major language families: Indo-Aryan (nearly 75%), Dravidian (around 20%), Austroasiatic (about 2%), and Tibeto-Burman (approximately 1%). Despite this multiplicity, multilingualism is a pervasive feature of Indian life, where people often use two or more languages-one at home, another at work, and yet another for wider communication. Each language carries its own script, literary tradition, and cultural heritage. For instance, the Sanskrit epics, Sangam literature, and Urdu poetry represent distinct but interrelated expressions of India's civilizational depth. Six Indian languages-Tamil, Sanskrit, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, and Odia-have been accorded the status of classical languages. Beyond linguistic variety lies a deeper layer of politics surrounding identity,

encompassing debates over the imposition of Hindi, the inclusion of additional languages in the Eighth Schedule, and the language of instruction in schools. Indeed, the issues of language, regional identity, and statehood movements (notably during the 1950s) are intricately interwoven and cannot be analyzed in isolation.

In Nepal, more than 123 languages are spoken. The majority of the population speaks Nepali, which belongs to the Indo-Aryan group—one of four major linguistic groups present in the country, alongside Sino-Tibetan, Austroasiatic, and Dravidian. In Bangladesh, Bengali is the official language and is spoken by nearly 90% of the population as either a first or second language. The Bengali script, derived from Brahmi, is associated with a rich literary heritage that includes the works of Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam. Additionally, more than 30 indigenous languages are spoken, particularly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Bangladesh's linguistic pattern is characterized by multilingualism: the mother tongue at home, Bangla for education and national identity, and English for higher education, international trade, and law. The country's 1952 Language Movement, which protested against the imposition of Urdu as the sole state language of Pakistan, represents a landmark event in its national history. Several protesters lost their lives on February 21, 1952, and this date is now commemorated as International Mother Language Day (recognized by UNESCO in 1999). The movement played a decisive role in shaping Bangladesh's national identity and subsequent independence struggle.

Bhutan, meanwhile, designates Dzongkha as its official and national language. It belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family and is written in the Tibetan Uchen script. Bhutan's linguistic landscape, however, also includes several regional languages such as Sharchopkha, Bumthangkha, Kurtoep, Khengkha, and Nepali, among other Indo-Aryan languages. English is widely used in education and administration. In Pakistan, Urdu serves as the national language and belongs to the Indo-Aryan family, written in the Perso-Arabic Nastaliq script. Although it is the mother tongue of only about 8% of the population, it is widely understood and functions as a *lingua franca*. English, a co-official language, dominates education, administration, and international business. Pakistan's regional linguistic profile is notably plural: Punjabi (40-45% of the population), Sindhi (15%), Pashto (15%), among others. While regional languages dominate home and community life, Urdu and English prevail in education, media, and governance—once again reflecting a deeply multilingual context.

In the Maldives, Dhivehi-written in the right-to-left Thaana script-is the sole official language and a key marker of national identity. It encompasses several regional dialects, including Male', Huvadhu, Fuvahmulah, and Mahl. Alongside Dhivehi, multiple foreign languages such as English (for higher education and business), Arabic (for religious and Islamic studies), and others like Hindi, Urdu, French, and German are used in tourism-related contexts, though not typically by native speakers.

Globalization constitutes the second most significant force in shaping identity. It has intensified the flow of culture, language, economy, and social aspiration, altering how individuals position themselves in the world relative to their origins. Cross-border communication, global media exposure, and consumer culture have redefined aspirations and social hierarchies. In South Asia, identity is increasingly linked to the possession of luxury goods, branded commodities, and the status symbols associated with them. Youth culture, in particular, has been influenced by this global consumer ethos, with high-end brands, smartphones, and logos serving as markers of prestige. Globalization thus generates hybrid, cosmopolitan identities that blend local traditions with global aesthetics.

Migration-both internal and transnational-further intensifies this hybridity. Millions of South Asians live and work in the Gulf states, North America, Europe, and other regions, sending remittances home and maintaining strong familial and cultural ties. Students pursuing education abroad similarly embody transnational experiences that fuse the host country's influences with the cultural ethos of their homeland. Migration facilitates not merely the flow of money but also of tastes, values, and media practices, producing what may be described as a pendulum of cultural exchange oscillating between the host society and the homeland. These processes generate transnational South Asian identities that challenge conventional notions of nationality and belonging.

Digitalization adds yet another layer to this evolving process of identity formation. Social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp function as new social structures that influence how individuals perform, perceive, and negotiate their identities. Online communities and interest-based groups enable people across the world to reconnect with their linguistic, cultural, or religious roots. Through these digital spaces, individuals build symbolic and affective connections that reinforce or reinvent their sense of belonging. However, digital identity is not always an authentic

reflection of real life; it often becomes a constructed performance that, in turn, shapes offline social structures. Through virtual interactions, people reproduce and transform linguistic and cultural belonging, demonstrating how digital media act as powerful agents in the contemporary structuration of South Asian identity.

2. Theoretical Framework

Anthony Giddens' structuration theory provides a significant departure from classical sociological perspectives on structure. In contrast to earlier theories that treated social structures as fixed, external, and constraining forces, Giddens conceptualized them as both the medium and outcome of human action. He argues that social life is an ongoing process in which structure and agency are interdependent—a dynamic relationship he terms the “duality of structure”.

According to Giddens (1984), structures exist only through the practices of human agents, and these practices, in turn, draw upon the very structures that they reproduce. Within this theoretical framework, he identifies three fundamental dimensions of structure in any social system: signification, legitimation, and domination.

1. Signification refers to the processes through which meaning is created and communicated, primarily through language and symbolic systems.
2. Legitimation involves the establishment of norms, rules, and moral codes that guide social behaviour and define what is acceptable or appropriate within a given society.
3. Domination concerns the exercise of power and control, particularly over resources—both material and human—that sustain social order.

Together, these dimensions form an interrelated system through which individuals interpret, reproduce, and transform their social worlds.

In classical sociological theories, foundational thinkers such as Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber tended to view social structures as largely static and externally imposed upon individuals. For Durkheim, social facts exerted coercive control over individual behaviour. For Marx, economic structures—the base and superstructure—determined consciousness and class relations. Weber's analysis of bureaucracy and rational-legal authority emphasized institutional forms of domination that regulated individual life. These perspectives shared a broadly top-down approach, emphasizing the

determinative influence of social systems while leaving limited scope for individual creativity or change.

Giddens' intervention radically reoriented this understanding. He argued that structure and agency should not be seen as separate or opposing entities but as mutually constitutive. Structures exist only through human action, and human action is, in turn, shaped by structural conditions. This continuous interaction between structure and agency forms the basis of what Giddens calls structuration—the process through which social systems are both reproduced and transformed.

Within this framework, rules and resources are central analytical components. Rules refer to the underlying principles, norms, and procedures that guide social conduct, communication, and interpretation. They encompass both explicit and implicit forms—ranging from moral codes and linguistic grammar to customary practices and institutional regulations. Rules thus constitute the signification and legitimation dimensions of structure.

Resources, on the other hand, represent the means through which individuals exert influence or achieve goals within a given context. Giddens distinguishes between two types of resources:

- ▶ Allocative resources, which involve control over material and economic objects (for example, technology, wealth, or land); and
- ▶ Authoritative resources, which involve control over people, positions, or organizations (for example, political power, leadership roles, or institutional authority).

These resources embody the domination dimension of structure and determine how power operates in social relations.

Social life, according to Giddens, is therefore a recursive process. Individuals draw upon shared rules and resources to perform social actions, and through these repeated performances, they simultaneously reproduce and transform the very structures that guide them. The duality of structure underscores that power is not simply repressive but also productive—it enables as much as it constrains.

Another critical concept in Giddens' theory is time-space distanciation, which refers to the stretching of social systems across time and space. Traditional societies were characterized by face-to-face interactions and geographically bounded relationships. However, with the rise of modernization, communication technologies, and global networks, social relations have increasingly become “disembedded” from immediate local contexts. Institutions such as

media, markets, and bureaucracies now link people and events separated by great distances, creating complex interdependencies across the globe.

In this sense, modern identity and social life are no longer confined to local settings but are continually shaped by distant institutions, technologies, and global flows. Time-space distancing thus captures the interconnectedness and simultaneity that define the modern-and increasingly digital-world.

When applied to South Asian contexts, Giddens' structuration theory offers a powerful lens to understand how individuals and communities negotiate their cultural and regional identities within overlapping structures of colonial legacies, state policies, globalization, and digital media. It allows us to see identity formation not as a one-way process imposed by structures, nor as a purely voluntaristic expression of agency, but as an evolving interplay between both. The dynamic between signification, legitimation, and domination helps explain how South Asian societies continuously reinterpret language, culture, and belonging while operating within persistent historical and institutional frameworks.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research design based on the analysis of secondary sources. It draws upon a wide range of scholarly materials, including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents, and relevant media sources, to examine the evolving nature of South Asian regional identities. Rather than generating primary empirical data, the study synthesizes existing literature to develop a theoretically informed understanding of identity formation in the South Asian context.

The analysis is guided by the conceptual framework of Anthony Giddens's Structuration Theory, which emphasizes the dynamic relationship between structure and agency in shaping social practices. This framework enables the study to explore how institutional structures—such as language policies, educational frameworks, globalization processes, and media systems—interact with the actions and cultural practices of individuals and communities in the production and transformation of collective identities.

A thematic analytical approach is employed to interpret the selected materials. The analysis focuses on identifying patterns that reflect the recursive interaction between structural forces and human agency. In particular, the study examines identity formation through

the three structural dimensions identified within structuration theory: signification (systems of meaning and communication), legitimation (norms and institutional rules), and domination (relations of power and control). Through this framework, the research provides a theoretically grounded interpretation of the processes through which South Asian identities are continuously negotiated, reproduced, and reshaped across local, national, and global contexts.

4. Application of Structuration Theory to South Asian Identity

Anthony Giddens' structuration theory offers a dynamic analytical lens for interpreting the processes through which South Asian identities are continually produced, reproduced, and transformed. It enables an understanding of identity not as a fixed essence but as an outcome of the constant interplay between structure and agency. Within this framework, social actors both draw upon and modify the institutional, cultural, and symbolic structures that shape their actions. The following subsections apply this theoretical framework to contemporary dimensions of South Asian identity-migration and diaspora, digital platforms, regional cinema and media, and state policy-to demonstrate how meaning, norms, and power are negotiated in practice.

4.1 Migration and Diaspora: Rules and Resources in Language Use

The increasing recognition of Hinglish-a hybrid fusion of Hindi and English-in global linguistic spaces exemplifies how South Asian linguistic practices are transforming formerly hierarchical global language structures. Words such as jugaad, timepass, and chai entering the Oxford English Dictionary symbolize more than linguistic inclusion; they represent the reversal of symbolic power and the assertion of South Asian agency within a historically Western linguistic framework.

Interpreted through Giddens' (1984) structuration theory, this phenomenon embodies the duality of structure. While English as a global structure has historically shaped modes of communication and education in South Asia, the everyday linguistic creativity of South Asian speakers now redefines that very structure. South Asians are no longer passive recipients of global linguistic norms but active participants reshaping them. This reflects how regional actors employ existing linguistic rules and global hierarchies as resources for creating new cultural meanings.

Migration further intensifies this process. The South Asian diaspora operates in transnational spaces where individuals navigate multiple cultural and linguistic systems simultaneously. In these contexts, language functions both as a rule and as a resource. Rules manifest as shared norms regarding when and how to use English, mother tongues, or hybrid forms in diverse settings such as family communication, workplaces, or online platforms. Resources include the multilingual repertoires-Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Tamil, or English-that migrants mobilize to negotiate belonging and exercise agency. Practices like code-switching, bilingual humor, or the use of South Asian idioms in international contexts exemplify how diasporic actors reproduce and simultaneously transform linguistic structures. The creative interplay of rules and resources in diasporic communication thus reflects Giddens' concept of structuration in action-where power operates not as a constraint but as a productive force enabling the reconfiguration of identity.

4.2 Digital Platforms: Reconstitution of Regional Identities Online

Digital media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp serve as new structural environments in which South Asians perform, negotiate, and reconstitute identity. These platforms provide both opportunities and constraints. They function as structures that define visibility, regulate expression, and organize interaction through algorithms, moderation systems, and linguistic preferences. At the same time, they offer resources for individuals to connect, express cultural pride, and reassert belonging beyond geographical borders.

Online devotional channels, linguistic meme communities, diasporic vlogs, and regional film fan pages exemplify how South Asians use digital spaces to articulate hybrid forms of belonging. Through these interactions, local cultural identities-such as Tamil, Bengali, or Punjabi-are projected into global digital arenas, transforming the notion of "regional identity" into a transnational and networked phenomenon.

In Giddensian terms, digital platforms embody time-space distanciation, enabling social relationships and identity expressions to extend across vast distances. The instantaneous sharing of regional songs, religious practices, or political debates allows geographically dispersed South Asians to participate in common cultural dialogues. Thus, digital media function as arenas of mutual structuration, where algorithmic systems shape individual behaviour, and individual

practices, in turn, influence collective digital cultures. These spaces exemplify the recursive relationship between agency and structure, producing hybrid, fluid, and continuously negotiated identities that transcend traditional borders.

4.3 Regional Cinema and Media: Reproduction of Cultural Codes

South Asian regional cinema and media serve as powerful systems of signification, transmitting cultural meanings, moral values, and collective imaginaries. Through language, visual representation, and narrative conventions, films and television serials reproduce the rules and norms that govern social life—whether concerning gender roles, caste relations, class aspirations, or familial honor. These media thus constitute symbolic structures that shape how societies perceive themselves.

At the same time, cinema and television act as resources through which new meanings and resistances emerge. Regional film industries in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Bengal, and other areas do more than preserve linguistic and cultural pride; they also reinterpret contemporary issues such as migration, social mobility, and gender equality. For instance, regional cinema has increasingly depicted women in empowered roles, questioned caste hierarchies, and explored the emotional complexity of transnational migration. Through audience reception and reinterpretation, these representations are not merely consumed but contested and re-signified, illustrating Giddens' view that social systems are both stable and transformable. The relationship between filmmaker, audience, and institution exemplifies a continuous process of structuration in which meanings are reproduced yet open to modification.

4.4 State Policy: NEP 2020 as a Structuring Framework Reinterpreted by Social Actors

State policy represents one of the most visible forms of structural influence in society. India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 serves as a powerful institutional framework that attempts to organize norms of education, language, and citizenship. The policy promotes multilingualism, digital learning, and cultural rootedness, thereby influencing how individuals perceive identity and knowledge. However, its practical implementation demonstrates that policy is not a static structure but a dynamic field of negotiation.

Teachers, students, parents, and state governments interpret and adapt NEP 2020's provisions according to local linguistic politics and

cultural priorities. For instance, while the policy encourages mother-tongue-based education at the primary level, its adoption varies across regions, reflecting differing attitudes toward language and aspiration. Such variation illustrates Giddens' concept of agency within structure-actors who, while constrained by institutional guidelines, also reinterpret and reshape them to fit their contexts. The ongoing dialogue between central policy and local adaptation exemplifies recursive structuration, where institutional structures influence human action, and human action, in turn, modifies the structure.

4.5 Examples from India: Structuration in Everyday Cultural Practice

4.5.1 "Naatu Naatu" and the Global Recognition of Local Culture

The global success of "Naatu Naatu", a Telugu-language song that won the Oscar for Best Original Song, represents more than an artistic triumph. It symbolizes the structuration of global culture through South Asian agency. The song's rhythms, rooted in Telugu folk traditions, and its visual aesthetics, derived from rural cultural forms, entered the global entertainment sphere-historically dominated by Western standards-and redefined what counts as world-class art.

In Giddens' (1984) terms, the global film industry functions as a structure, setting the rules and hierarchies of cultural validation. South Asian artists, through creative agency, mobilize indigenous resources-music, dance, language-to challenge these hierarchies. The Oscar recognition is thus not merely Western acknowledgment but evidence of mutual transformation: global structures adapting to new creative standards, and local agents redefining global cultural legitimacy. The success of "Naatu Naatu" exemplifies how time-space distancing, enabled by digital circulation, allows regional expressions to attain global resonance while retaining local authenticity.

4.5.2 McDonald's Vegetarian Menus During Navratri

The adaptation of McDonald's India to local cultural norms-such as serving only vegetarian burgers during Navratri-illustrates the process of mutual structuration between global capitalism and local cultural systems. McDonald's, as a multinational corporation, represents a global structure characterized by standardized production and consumption models. However, within India, strong religious and cultural norms concerning food purity and ritual practice function as local structural rules that shape consumer behaviour.

By incorporating these norms, McDonald's demonstrates how global corporations negotiate legitimacy by aligning with indigenous values. Local consumers, in turn, exercise agency by demanding culturally resonant products, thereby compelling multinational entities to internalize local meanings. This interplay between global structures and local practices highlights that globalization in South Asia is not a one-way imposition but a reciprocal process of structuration, where power and adaptation coexist.

4.5.3 The Contradiction Between Linguistic Decolonization and Epistemic Dependence

India's NEP 2020, by emphasizing early education in the mother tongue, seeks to promote cultural rootedness and linguistic decolonization. Yet, the global structure of knowledge production remains predominantly Western. Authoritative academic texts, theoretical frameworks, and validation mechanisms continue to be produced and controlled by institutions in the Global North. Consequently, while local education policies express agency in reclaiming linguistic autonomy, they operate within an epistemic order that privileges Western modes of knowledge.

This contradiction exemplifies Giddens' concept of duality of structure. South Asia attempts to assert agency through indigenous knowledge systems, yet these efforts unfold within the constraints of global academia's structural hierarchies. The persistence of such epistemic inequalities underscores how power operates through both material and symbolic resources—reflecting the ongoing tension between local resistance and global dependence.

4.5.4 Exclusion of Indian Sociologists from Global Canon Formation

The omission of prominent Indian scholars from globally circulated academic compendiums such as *Fifty Key Sociologists: The Formative Theorists* and *Fifty Key Sociologists: The Contemporary Theorists* (Routledge) illustrates another domain of structural inequality—epistemic marginalization. Despite their foundational contributions to sociological thought, figures such as M. N. Srinivas, G. S. Ghurye, Andre Béteille, A. R. Desai, Veena Das, and Leela Dube remain under-represented in Western academic canons.

This exclusion reflects how global structures of recognition and validation continue to privilege particular geographic and institutional centers of knowledge. From a structuration perspective,

these omissions are not neutral oversights but manifestations of enduring power relations in the academic field. Nevertheless, South Asian intellectuals persist in reshaping disciplinary boundaries through critical and comparative work, thereby exercising agency within these global structures. The gradual international recognition of Indian sociologists signals an emerging reconfiguration of the sociology discipline itself—an instance of epistemic structuration unfolding in real time.

5. Analysis

Identity in the contemporary world can no longer be understood as a fixed or static entity. Within the rapidly globalizing context of South Asia, the process of identity formation has accelerated and diversified more than ever before. Yet, this dynamism does not imply a complete detachment from cultural roots or traditional foundations. On the contrary, individuals migrating to new environments continue to carry elements of their homeland with them, consciously or unconsciously reproducing cultural practices, languages, and values. These diasporic attachments often result in the formation of community clusters abroad—spaces where individuals of similar origins live in close proximity, maintain shared traditions, and collectively sustain a distinct identity within the host society.

The process is not one of total assimilation but rather of selective and reflective integration. Migrants engage with the host culture in ways that allow functional coexistence while preserving symbolic aspects of their own traditions. Over time, this blending produces hybrid social forms, where structural influences of the host society intersect with the agentive practices of migrants seeking to maintain cultural continuity. For example, South Asian communities in London, Toronto, or Dubai continue to celebrate regional festivals, cook traditional cuisines, and communicate in their native languages, even as they adapt to the economic and institutional structures of their adopted nations.

The concept of remittances further illustrates how identity operates simultaneously at multiple levels—economic, cultural, and emotional. The act of sending money back home is not merely a financial transaction; it is embedded with meaning and reciprocity. Alongside money, migrants transfer cultural values, aspirations, and new tastes acquired abroad, influencing the consumption patterns, social expectations, and cultural preferences of families and communities in their home countries. These exchanges constitute a

two-way structuration process, in which the migrant's identity and the home society's structure are continuously reshaped through ongoing interaction.

This process can be observed in the formation of distinct localities such as "Little India", "Chinatown", or South Asian enclaves in global cities. These spaces function as symbolic extensions of homeland culture, reflecting how individuals and groups reconstitute belonging across time and space. Although physically separated by geography, these communities are technologically connected through digital communication, creating a sense of proximity that transcends territorial distance. Giddens' notion of time-space distanciation aptly captures this phenomenon: events, festivals, and even political debates in one South Asian country evoke reactions, solidarity, or criticism among diasporic populations spread across continents.

Furthermore, the historical linkages among South Asian nations strengthen this transnational sense of shared identity. During the colonial period, labour migration across the British Empire created demographic overlaps that persist today, forming ancestral connections among populations in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal. These intertwined histories continue to influence patterns of language, religion, and culture. Although each nation developed its own political identity post-independence, the structural residues of colonialism-such as shared administrative systems, educational models, and linguistic hierarchies-still shape social life. Within this context, Giddens' theory helps explain how historical structures continue to influence action while leaving space for agency to reinterpret those legacies in contemporary terms.

Even within South Asia itself, internal migration-rural to urban or inter-state movement-produces micro-level hybridity. Individuals adapt to new linguistic environments, adopt urban lifestyles, and yet remain anchored to their regional or caste-based affiliations. This dual positioning reinforces the idea that structure alone cannot determine identity. Instead, individuals and groups exercise creative agency to reinterpret, resist, or modify structural conditions. Over time, the agency of countless actors reproduces and transforms the larger social order-a process that Giddens identifies as structuration.

Events in one part of South Asia often resonate across borders. Political developments, social movements, or cultural achievements in India, Bangladesh, or Sri Lanka evoke emotional responses from South Asians worldwide. This shared sense of resonance illustrates that identity is not confined within national boundaries but emerges from a

wider regional consciousness sustained through transnational media, migration, and collective memory.

Thus, South Asian identity must be viewed as a dialectical construct, continuously negotiated between structural continuity and agentive innovation. Individuals, communities, and institutions constantly engage in processes that reaffirm or challenge existing power hierarchies, cultural codes, and global narratives. In this sense, identity becomes both a site of resistance and a space of reproduction—a dynamic equilibrium that mirrors the essence of Giddens' duality of structure.

Ultimately, the analysis reveals that neither structures nor individual actions operate in isolation. The forces of globalization, technological transformation, and historical interconnectedness interact with human creativity and adaptation to produce new cultural syntheses. South Asia today exemplifies this condition: a region deeply rooted in tradition yet profoundly global in its outlook, continuously reinventing itself through the recursive relationship between structure and agency.

6. Conclusion

South Asian identity cannot be reduced either to a shared colonial past or solely to the spontaneous agency of its people. Rather, it emerges as a dynamic and evolving construct shaped through the continuous interaction between structural conditions and human agency. Viewed through the lens of Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory, identity appears not as a fixed inheritance but as an ongoing process of reproduction and transformation embedded in everyday social practices. Cultural, linguistic, and digital interactions demonstrate how individuals and communities constantly negotiate meaning within the institutional and symbolic frameworks that shape social life.

The analysis shows that practices such as linguistic adaptation, migration, digital engagement, and cultural creativity function as key arenas where structure and agency intersect. The emergence of hybrid linguistic forms like Hinglish, the global popularity of the song Naatu Naatu from the film RRR, the localization strategies of multinational corporations such as McDonald's during the festival of Navratri, and policy initiatives like the National Education Policy 2020 illustrate how South Asian societies reinterpret global influences through locally grounded cultural meanings. These examples demonstrate that South Asia is not merely a recipient of global modernity but an active participant in shaping its cultural and institutional forms.

At the same time, structural inequalities continue to influence the global circulation of knowledge. The relative marginalization of South Asian intellectual traditions within dominant academic canons—despite the contributions of scholars such as M. N. Srinivas, A. R. Desai, Veena Das, and Leela Dube—highlights the persistence of epistemic hierarchies in global knowledge production. This imbalance underscores the need to critically examine how intellectual authority and legitimacy are structured within the international academic system.

Future research may extend this analysis by undertaking empirical studies of how structuration processes operate across different South Asian contexts, particularly within rapidly expanding digital and transnational networks. Comparative investigations of migration patterns, media flows, and educational reforms across South Asian societies could further illuminate how identities are negotiated within diverse institutional environments.

More broadly, examining South Asia through the perspective of structuration opens new possibilities for understanding globalization itself. Rather than viewing the region simply as a cultural periphery influenced by global forces, future scholarship may explore how South Asian societies actively contribute to reshaping global cultural, intellectual, and institutional landscapes. In this sense, South Asian identity remains a continuously negotiated and evolving process, sustained through the ongoing interaction between historical structures and the creative agency of its people.

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