

## **Family Trajectories in the Context of Globalization : A Live Experience of a Family in Nepal**

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*The process of globalization has reordered the world by compressing and distancing time and space at the global level. It has a huge impact on different social institutions and facets of social life. The purpose of this paper is to explore the impact of globalization on specific family in general and the globalization from above and below in particular. To fulfill the purpose, I have used an in-depth interview and taken an individual as a respondent. In the body of the paper, by using the lens of globalization from above I have described how multinational forces, agencies, and branded goods have influenced the particular individual's family trajectories on the one hand. And, through the lens of globalization from below, I have explored the use and transactions of pirated versions of goods and their impacts on individual's family trajectories on the other hand. Finally, the conclusion part of the paper*

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*suggests that we should not take these two processes separately rather they are the two polar of the same process.*

[**Keywords** : Globalization, Family Trajectories, Globalization from below, Globalization from above, Nepal]

## **1. Introduction**

As a buzzword, globalization simply refers to “the intensification of global interconnectedness” (Inda and Rosaldo, 2002 : 2) in different spheres of social life. Since the late 1980s, it has become one of the hot topics in academia. Though different disciplines and scholars have consensus and controversies regarding its definition and features, the “reordering of time and space” (Inda and Rosaldo, 2002 : 5) can be taken as a theoretically profound one. Harvey (1989) defines it as a process of “time and space compression” (cited in Inda and Rosaldo, 2002 : 6). This indicates that the economic and social processes in the world are speeding up, resulting in the globe becoming smaller and the constraints of time and space becoming less significant. Additionally, due to the process of globalization, it is possible for people around the world, who live in different locations, to experience the same thing at the same time, creating a global village.

Similarly, globalization has also been defined as a process of “time and space distancing” (Giddens, 1990 cited in Inda and Rosaldo, 2002 : 8). This definition indicates the intensification of social relations at a global level in which it became possible to connect the presence and absence. Moreover, it has intensified the social relations at a global level in such a way that nothing remained local without affecting the global. Similarly, Lewellen (2002 : 7-8) defines it as :

Contemporary globalization as the increasing flow of trade, finance, culture, ideas, and people brought about by the sophisticated technology of communication and travel and by the worldwide spread of neoliberal capitalism, and its local and regional adaptations to and resistance against these flows.

Thus, we should analyze globalization as the reordering of time and spaces in which the processes of time and space compression and distancing simultaneously exist.

Globalization is a social institution that has impacted families worldwide, including those in Nepal. In Nepalese society, there are two major types of families: nuclear families, consisting of married partners and their offspring, and extended or joint families, consisting

of at least three generations (Mishra, 2007). The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of globalization on family trajectories in Nepal, specifically in relation to a particular family. Additionally, this paper explores the impact of globalization on families from two perspectives: globalization from above and globalization from below.

## **2. Methodology**

In this study, I used case study as a philosophical considerations to explore the family trajectories in the context of globalization. A case study is an in-depth study of a single entity or instance, focusing on understanding its context and characteristics rather than establishing causal relationships between variables. It provides a comprehensive analysis of a specific case, such as an event, an individual, or a community, by examining its unique features and surrounding circumstances (Ojha, 2021). Similarly, I used an in-depth interview as a technique of data collection, taking 40 years old, Ram Bahadur (Pseudonym) as the respondent.

## **3. Anthropology of Globalization**

The anthropology of globalization explores how anthropology differs in its understanding of the process of globalization compared to other disciplines. According to Pieterse (2009 : 17), anthropology defines globalization as “a long-term historical process of growing worldwide interconnectedness.” Anthropology studies the global-local articulation in the context of culture and how globalization impacts specific societies, cultures, and ways of life. One unique feature of anthropology in the study of globalization is its emphasis on how individuals and groups mediate the large-scale processes of globalization in culturally specific ways (Inda and Rosaldo, 2002).

The anthropology of globalization also prioritizes the cultural dynamics of globalization. It examines the deterritorialization of culture, cultural imperialism, homogenization of the world, and a dislocated world (Inda and Rosaldo, 2002). In the deterritorialization process, the connections between culture and place weaken where they were originally situated, while simultaneously expanding into new time-space contexts. Cultural imperialism and homogenization refer to the dissemination of dominant culture worldwide, resulting in cultural homogenization. The concept of a dislocated world suggests that no culture can hold an unchallenged position of dominance in the globalization process.

Moreover, anthropology of globalization also treats globalization as “a process of hybridization that gives rise to a global *mélange*” (Pieterse, 2009 : 65). This suggests that the globalization process should not be taken only as so-called weak cultures blindly adopt dominant cultural traits, but rather borrow the cultural parts of different cultures which contribute to the dominant one too. Moreover, in this process different cultural traits blended into one as a process of mutual imbrications (Inda and Rosaldo, 2002 : 22). Furthermore, Inda and Rosaldo (2002) have taken this process as a reciprocal nature of cultural globalization. In this process, we see the mixture of global and local culture as a form of “glocalization” (Robertson, 1995, cited in Inda & Rosaldo, 2002 : 31).

As a recent development, the term “globalization from below” is also dominant among academia as a discourse of globalization (Mathews and Vega, 2012). It provides a different angle to scholars in general and anthropologists in particular about how to grasp the process of globalization from the subjects or culturally specific ways. Moreover, the advocates of the “globalization from below” have raised the questions on current perspectives of globalization by saying that they only talk about globalization as “globalization from above” (de Sousa Santos, 2006). The perspective of “globalization from below” draws attention to the agency of the subjects in the process of globalization and considers the ways in which people at the grassroots level engage in global processes and redefines their identities and cultures in response to global influences.

#### **4. Globalization from Below and Globalization from Above**

Mathews and Vega (2012) describe “globalization from below” as a transnational flow of people and goods involving small amounts of capital and informal transactions. This phenomenon is often associated with the developing world but is present globally. It operates outside of the legal frameworks and regulation of multinational corporations and states. Reliable data and statistics are often not available for this informal economy, making it difficult to study. Multi-sited ethnography and thick description are useful methods for exploring globalization from below (Pliez, 2012).

In contrast, “globalization from above” refers to the globalization of transnational corporations and states, which operate on a

global level with billion-dollar budgets and formal regulation. It aims to regulate and restrict globalization from below but exists and functions as an integrated part of the same process. The participants in globalization from below have similar desires to those engaged in globalization from above, and both are based on free-market principles. Therefore, globalization from below is not opposed to globalization from above and does not seek to destroy capitalism, but instead seeks to benefit from it (Mathews and Vega, 2012).

## **5. Experiencing “Globalization from Above” : An Impact on a Family**

The phenomenon of “globalization from above” has had a multifaceted impact on Ram Bahadur’s family, spanning various dimensions of his lives. Historically, his parents’ lineage has resided in a hilly village in eastern Nepal for five generations, with no recorded documentation of his forefathers’ arrival or settlement. Prior to two decades ago, they had lived collectively as a joint family. However, presently, they have transitioned into a nuclear family structure, with his residence located in an urban city within the Kathmandu district. Meanwhile, his sister has relocated to another urban city in eastern Nepal following her marriage, while his elder brother has ventured to Europe in pursuit of higher education and employment opportunities. As a result, his family has now expanded across three generations and is geographically dispersed across different nuclear family units.

This sense of connectedness despite geographical distance is a result of the “time and space compression” brought about by globalization (Harvey, 1989 cited in Inda and Rosaldo, 2002 : 6). Globalization has also made it possible for the family to celebrate global events at the same time, and for the family members to celebrate festivals together even though they are in different parts of the world. In addition, archived materials and social media have made it possible for the author to connect with their ancestors and other family members from the past.

The influence of globalization on the trajectories of Ram Bahadur’s family has been significant in the past two decades. During the time when his family members lived as a joint family forty years ago, their exposure to global markets was limited. Their sustenance primarily depended on locally produced groceries, with only a few

international products, such as Panasonic MP3 players, Seiko watches, and Hara brand jeans, being associated with prestige. These goods were accessible only after traveling approximately 60 kilometers to the nearest market. Additionally, it was customary for his father, who held a principal position in a locally established government secondary school, to possess a radio to uphold his social status. As children, his brother and Ram Bahadur would typically dress in traditional Nepali attire, the “daurasuruwal.”

Subsequently, since the 1990s, globalization’s impact on their family has gradually increased due to advancements and availability of information technology, political participation in local governance, and the influx of foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) committed to universal objectives such as inclusive democracy and human rights. The resultant shift in consumption patterns has also impacted their family, with many members abandoning agricultural work for foreign employment, thereby assuming the role of consumers instead of producers.

During the 1990s, globalization increasingly impacted the trajectory of his family. Concurrently, the introduction of multi-party democracy in Nepal ushered in the concept of local governance and decentralization. While the availability of information technology and political participation in local governance led to increased awareness, the post-1990 period was marked by ethnic and minority movements, as well as a Maoist insurgency, which caused upheaval in rural areas. Consequently, the ideas of inclusive democracy, human rights, and development became universal agendas. To fulfill these agendas, the state, market, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) joined forces in his village. Furthermore, foreign employment opportunities compelled individuals to move away from agricultural work, resulting in a shift in consumption patterns towards consumerism. These shifts have had a considerable impact on his family.

The transformative impact of globalization has underscored the significance of education across all domains of life. The breakdown of joint families and the emergence of nuclear ones has been propelled by the availability of higher education and employment opportunities. Over the last two decades, the village where his parents and Ram Bahadur’s resided has experienced significant changes due to globalization. The advent of technology has altered the consumption



patterns of families, including his parents, with access to items such as televisions, mobile phones, radios, and the internet. Moreover, the villagers are now cognizant of global phenomena, such as democracy, human rights, politics, and development. Previously, products like Panasonic Japanese MP3 Players, Seiko watches, and Hara brand jeans paint were symbolic of locally constructed prestige economies and were only available to his father. However, they are now accessible to the majority of villagers, transforming the meaning of prestige economies and leading to a more urbanized village.

As a result of international and national migration, Ram Bahadur's elder brother now resides in Europe, while he has been living in Kathmandu with his nuclear family for the past two decades. His concerns and desires were once limited to the local context during the joint family days with the parents. However, the awareness has gradually increased, and he is now more attuned to the activities of multinational institutions and organizations such as the United Nations, World Trade Organization, United States Agency for International Development, and Japan International Cooperation Agency, among others, as their policies have become a part of his daily concerns. Similarly, topics such as democracy, terrorism, human rights, climate change, and free markets are now among his regular considerations. Despite the opportunities and challenges that globalization presents, Ram Bahadur has become a globally responsible citizen.

The impact of globalization from above is conspicuous in the consumption practices of Ram Bahadur's family. They are equipped with high-speed internet services that allow them to communicate and share information, despite being geographically dispersed. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Imo, and YouTube, have become indispensable in their daily lives. Multinational brands, including Coca-Cola, burgers, pizza, and noodles, have become routine items in their consumption patterns, effectively transforming them from producers to consumers. Their daily routines and practices are now interwoven with global practices, and vice versa, in a process referred to as global-local articulation or time and space compression and distancing.

The impact of globalization from above on Ram Bahadur's family has produced certain constraints in addition to the opportunities it has created. The inflow of international capital via remittance has undermined the locally established moral economy of

prestige, resulting in a loss of significance. As a result, celebrations of festivals and the performance of rituals have become more expensive. The adoption of a globalized consumption pattern of unhealthy junk food has adversely affected the health of his family members, as locally produced healthy foods have become less accessible due to the extensive promotion of such unhealthy products. This has contributed to an increase in common diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure. Moreover, social relationships have become commoditized, with individuals prioritizing relationships that yield financial benefits.

## **6. Experiencing “Globalization from Below” : An Impact on a Family**

The impact of “globalization from below” on Ram Bahadur’s family as a micro institution has been noteworthy. It can be viewed as a derivative of globalization from above. Approximately four decades ago, when they lived as a joint family in an eastern Nepalese village, counterfeit or replicated products were not easily obtainable within the local area. Their only option was to purchase original items, unlike today where alternatives are readily available. Clothing was also scarce, and possessing a watch was considered a symbol of prestige. Consequently, his joint family was perceived as affluent within the local context because they possessed items that were highly valued in the locally established prestige economy.

The impact of globalization from below on the locally constructed prestige economy in Ram Bahadur’s neighborhood has been substantial. The availability of both pirated and original versions of commodities has reshaped the way in which individuals assess their status, with many now opting for pirated goods. This phenomenon is attributed to the connection of local markets to other markets in Nepal and beyond its borders, including Tibet. The transportation of these goods has been facilitated by gifts from foreign employees, particularly those working in the Gulf and Malaysia. Consequently, the availability of these goods has redefined the status of families, including his former joint family. His former status as a wealthy family, based on possession of a few objects that held high value in the local prestige economy, has been recalibrated. As consumer preferences continue to evolve, his family’s status has declined to become average.



The impact of globalization from below on Ram Bahadur's nuclear family residing in Kathmandu for the past two decades has had a profound effect on our education. Notably, the ease and affordability of access to essential teaching and learning materials have improved significantly. Previously, acquiring such materials was a challenge. However, today they have access to low-priced South Asian versions of books that are commensurate with our financial capacity. The impact of globalization from below on his family's consumption patterns is evident in the acquisition of electronic gadgets and software in duplicate or pirated versions, as observed by Mathews and Vega (2012). The proliferation of these goods is facilitated by their low cost, accessibility, and affordability. The original versions of the software, on the other hand, are subject to high taxes, rendering them unaffordable to most. Furthermore, pirated versions operate outside the scope of the law, as noted by Mathews and Vega (2012). The availability of pirated software has enabled access to vast electronic book archives, which were previously inaccessible. The acquisition of pirated copies of branded watches such as Seiko, Omega, Rolex, Tissot, among others, has also become more accessible to the middle and upper-lower classes due to their affordability, costing only a few thousand Nepalese rupees.

Scholars have examined the impact of globalization from below on clothing, with a particular focus on the availability of duplicate or copy versions of branded clothes and shoes. Mathews and Vega (2012) argue that this phenomenon, which is largely attributed to Chinese-made products, is a result of globalization from below. Liechty (2003) adds that there is a moral dimension to the purchasing behavior of middle-class families, who prefer to shop in what he terms the "ijjat economy," which involves purchasing from local stores rather than roadside vendors. Despite the widespread availability of duplicate branded clothing, Ram Bahadur still choose to purchase from local clothing stores and gift shoes and jackets to his relatives living in western countries and Australia.

The impact of globalization from below on Ram Bahadur's family is also evident in the branding of food, with many local restaurants and street vendors offering food under the names of multinational brands, often without legal authorization. Despite this, these establishments have captured a significant portion of the middle and upper-class customer base in his locality. As a middle-class family, Ram Bahadur's prioritizes restaurants that provide quality food at reasonable prices, regardless of their branding.

While globalization from below has brought increased access and affordability of pirated goods, it is not without risks and drawbacks. These goods often lack warranties and guarantees and may be less efficient and effective than their branded counterparts. Moreover, they may not meet safety and health standards, which can pose potential risks to consumers. Despite the affordability and accessibility of these goods, they can cause problems such as software glitches and difficulties with keeping our gadgets updated. In a competitive global market, it is unlikely that relying on pirated or illegally obtained goods can truly compete with the benefits of using genuine branded products.

## **7. Conclusion**

Globalization is a multifaceted phenomenon that has engendered a global interconnectedness that has transformed the world into a global village. While globalization is commonly viewed as a top-down process, it is also essential to consider the role of “globalization from below” in which individuals and local communities participate in and contribute to the globalization process. Ram Bahadur’s family has experienced the effects of both forms of globalization. For example, the process of globalization from above has transformed the traditional joint family structure into nuclear families. This transformation has been driven by the proliferation of Western culture and values, which emphasize individualism and personal choice. As a result, smaller households with fewer family members are now more prevalent than large extended families.

The process of globalization from above has also transformed the moral economy of prestige, with local social relationships and networks such as caste or kinship affiliations being replaced by consumerism and the consumption of global brands and products. This commodification has resulted in new forms of social hierarchies and inequalities, where access to global brands and products confers a higher degree of prestige than those who lack access to them. On the other hand, globalization from below has had a significant impact on Ram Bahadur’s family’s life. This is exemplified by our consumption of pirated or copy versions of multinational enterprise products, which are often cheaper and more accessible but of lower quality, lacking warranties and guarantees.

Such practices are not without risks and potential health problems, particularly for those who consume these goods.

The impact of globalization on family trajectories is a result of both globalization from above and globalization from below, which are interconnected and mutually influential. The globalization process is characterized by its complexity and multifaceted nature, and is shaped by the actions and agency of individuals and local communities. Consequently, it is imperative to examine the impact of globalization on family trajectories from a long-term historical perspective, and to explore how local cultural practices and values mediate the globalization process in culturally specific ways. By adopting such an approach, we can gain a deeper understanding of the impact of globalization on families and communities, and work towards creating a more just and equitable global society.

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