

SOCIOLOGY OF YOUTH CULTURE : A STUDY OF TWO SITES IN DELHI

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Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**SOCIOLOGY OF YOUTH CULTURE : A STUDY OF TWO SITES IN DELHI**” submitted by Amrita Dash in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University, has not been previously submitted for the reward of any degree to this or any other University. This is a bonafide work.

We recommend this dissertation to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Amrita
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INTRODUCTION

The present era is exploding with youthful fervour. The youth have successfully captured the attention of the rest of the society. As a result, one finds that after politics, the most debated on, discussed about and written upon topics relate to the youth. But, even after being well scrutinized under microscopic eyes, youth and the culture/subculture they spawn is shrouded in mystery and ambiguity. Because the youth live so much in a world of their own – having their own culture, languages, special symbols and most importantly, value systems – the society, at large remains only vaguely aware about the way the former spend their time, the things that are important to them, the values they hold and their patterns of activities and interests. This study titled '**Sociology of Youth Culture: A Study of Two Sites in Delhi**' was conceived to make an attempt at understanding and presenting the vagaries of youth culture in a more clear light within the ambit of Sociology and Social Anthropology.

While engaging with the sociology of youth culture, it is necessary to elaborate the sociological connotations of 'culture'. 'Culture' can be used to convey a plethora of meanings. In India, the Sanskrit term for culture is *sanskriti*. *Sanskriti* is derived from *Sanskar*, meaning ritual performance. Right from the day he is born, a Hindu goes through various ritual performances as a result of which he is accepted into various roles, like that of an adult or a husband, in the course of his life. *Sanskriti* stands for that state of collective life which can be attained only after going through the various *sanskars*¹. It is a process of refinement. In other words, man is born as a social being; he attains sociality by going through the *sanskars*.

But the term has been used differently in anthropological literature. All that a given people has created-artifact and taboo, technological system and social

¹ Majumdar, D.N. and Madan, T.N. (1985), *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, Mayoor Paperbacks, p. 12.

institution, implements of work and mode of worship-the anthropologist has named culture; and for all that is man made wherever found he uses the same term generically². For the anthropologist, then, 'culture' signifies, in broad terms, the total social heritage of mankind. The social theorists acknowledge that from their life experiences, people develop a set of rules and procedures for meeting their needs. The set of rules and procedures, together with a supporting set of ideas and values, is called culture. Simply stated, culture is everything which is socially learned and shared by the members of a society. The individual receives culture as part of a social heritage and, in turn, may reshape the culture and introduce changes which then become part of the heritage of succeeding generations.

Culture has been defined differently by different anthropologists. For example, according to E.B. Tylor, culture stands for the beliefs, ideas, customs, laws, morals, arts and other capabilities and skills acquired by man as a member of society³. Then there is the formalistic, aesthetic viewpoint of Ruth Benedict, according to which culture is not so much to be conceived in terms of the content of social life as in terms of its formal ordering and organization. B. Malinowski and A.R. Radcliffe- Brown take the instrumental, humanistic view of culture. To the former, culture stands for a total way of life which secures for an individual the satisfaction of his bio-psychic drives and the fulfillment of other wants and cravings and, ultimately, invests him with freedom. Radcliffe- Brown regards culture as cultivation, the process of handing down and acquiring traditions, as a result of which society is perpetuated⁴. On the other hand, there is a recent viewpoint espoused by Linton, Kluckhohn and Kroeber which takes its stand on the place of subjective nature of human understanding⁵. According to them, culture is only a model constructed, not by a people themselves, but by an

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 13.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

anthropologist who studies their life. Therefore, it is to be distinguished from the actual conduct of life.

Our interest in this work lies in situating youth culture/subculture within the broader parameters of 'culture'. Each complex society does not have a single, uniform culture; instead it has a common core of traits and complexes and an assortment of subcultures. People live and function within these subcultures. The youth represent an actual or potential revolutionary and creative force, capable of bringing about the essential transformation and development of the society, of assuring its future well-being. And, the so-called youth culture is a result of the fact that young people have to wait so long before they can pass into the adult society. The young are compelled to create a youth culture and live within it. This subculture is characterized by distinct views on definition of success in life, religion, relationship, love, marriage, sexuality, value commitments etc. In attempting to study youth culture, the focus of this work is on how young people think, dream and see themselves and how they are seen or socially constructed.

The 'youth' emerged as a problematic category in India with the advent of mass industrialization in the post-independence period and then, in the post liberalization phase in the nineties. Immediately after independence, youth in India were infused with idealistic thoughts and were observed as a major force in the process of nation-building. Youth movements and forums were concerned with indigenous problems and questions – that of development, employment, social justice etc. But, the advent of privatization, globalization and liberalization brought about a radical change in the outlook, orientation and cultural practices of the youth. All this is most apparent in the metropolises of our country which nurture a very heterogeneous youth population.

The Indian metropolitan youth have been overwhelmed by the rapid flow of signs, images and information from the west. Moreover, urbanization and industrialization have ushered in certain structural peculiarities in our society:—

- (i) A long period of education that is necessitated partly, by the need for extensive preparation and training for a position within the complex urban-industrial society and partly, by the custodial function of educational institutions to delay youth's entry into the labour market.
- (ii) Highly specialized division of labour.
- (iii) Youth's considerable share of post liberalization affluence.
- (iv) Relatively high social and geographic mobility to which young individuals are exposed.

Such structural changes have also modified the cultural complexes beyond recognition. This is most evident in super urbanized and industrialized metros. As a result, the metropolitan youth culture has also undergone a number of changes.

This study is on youth culture in a metropolis since the former is an invention of urban-industrial life. The epitome of this culture has been evolving in the metros, which have generated armies of adolescents who, even into their twenties march to their own peculiarly youthful tune and impose a moratorium on a range of adult characteristics. But, despite the confidence and supposed brazenness, the metro youth are caught up in the web of complexities which characterizes their milieu. In this work, we concentrate on how the youth negotiate with an environment which is starkly different from that faced by their parents, their attitudes regarding important issues in life, their attempts at handling their troubles and their freedom and most importantly, the manner in which they face the crisis of identity which functions as the crucible out of

which the young will emerge, hopefully intact in mind and body and ready to assume a responsible, productive life.

This study is empirically located in Delhi. Delhi is a culturally heterogeneous city. As the capital of a multi-cultural nation and as the residence and working place of administrators, businessmen and professionals from all over India, its regional enclaves reflect the nation's cultural diversity. Needless to state that the youth population of the city is also heterogeneous. This hybridity and diversity provides many interesting sites for the study of youth culture. Among them, two sites have been chosen : a site of learning and a site of consumption. First, in a site of learning, for example, a college, the youth finds himself confronted with the macrocosm of Indian diversity. Within his college are people who eat differently, talk differently and dress differently. Most of them have manifestly different cultural behaviour. Their exposure is to different beliefs and attitudes. Hence, the college is a conglomeration of all kinds of hybrids and native cultures. In each moment of discovering communality and a continuity across such myriad patterns of being, the youth is confronted by contradictions, dissimilarities and discontinuities which get compounded by the impersonal, less cohesive and less regulative college system. This study attempts to sociologically analyse the various ways in which the youth in the college deal with these new challenges and with questions related to their careers, political leanings, religious affiliations etc. Second in a site of consumption, for example a market, the youth finds himself blinded by the new age mantra of consumerism. Having more and more of consumer products is becoming an indicator of happiness and prosperity. The market today is increasingly targeting the youth and integrating the young consumers within a rich tapestry of social status and symbolic meaning. In this work, we try to contextualize youth and youth culture in a market situation where as per the

requirements of the globalized economy, goods are being intricately woven into the fabric of social life and cultural significance.

This study is focussed on the youth culture in India for the potential force of the young people is so significant that what is done to the youth, with the youth and by the youth may well become the yardstick for judging the effectiveness of economic and social development. The status of youth is fast changing from a passive minority to an active majority in this age of globalization. More so, when the population of youth between 15 to 24 years amounts to 200 million which is a substantial phenomenon in India vis-à-vis developing countries⁶. The young generation neither follows and nor is expected to tread the weather beaten path of the adults. It is widely acknowledged that the youth obey the dictates of a culture which is peculiarly and distinctly their own. And however much they may be discredited as frivolous, the society at large, is willing to woo the youth in style. The polity relies on the youth participation to raise the country to new levels of achievement and national growth; the youth fads, interests and styles dictate business and industry and the social scene relies upon youth for its ideas and creativity regarding social revival. The rationale behind the study of youth culture may be further reinforced by its relevance in the present scenario. As stated earlier, the Indian youth of the new millennium have been witness to the radical economic reforms and have been vastly influenced by the major socio-political changes induced in the country as a result of the latter. Hence, the youth culture has also assumed new and hitherto, largely unexplored dimensions. Therefore, this study is relevant since it attempts to study youth and their culture in order to unravel the true nature of their attitudes, values, aspirations and views.

⁶ Ramsesh, V. (2003), "From Adolescents to Achievers", in *Employment News*, (Nov 8-14), p. 1.

A limitation of this study is that within the broader parameters of youth culture, it focusses upon urban/metropolitan youth culture as its area of interest. Though it is acknowledged that the youth cultures flourishing in villages, semi-urban areas and small towns are as important and offer manifold vistas of exploration, it could neither have been possible nor feasible to deal with a number of spheres of youth culture within the requirements of a M.Phil dissertation. In order to do justice to the study and make a comprehensive and sincere attempt to understand youth culture, the sociological enquiry is limited to the metropolitan youth culture. Moreover, it was easier to conduct the study in the immediate surroundings (i.e. Delhi) since it did not require a long period of adjustment to the proposed sites (college and market) and also the work could be successfully completed within the given time-limit.

Methodology

In order to collect data, the following methods have been used :-

1. **Ethnography** – It refers to the direct observation of the activity of members of a particular social group, and the description and evaluation of such activity. In this study, ethnography and observation (both participant and non-participant) were used as major tools of data collection while studying the college and market place. For example, in the college, the various activities like classroom lectures, fests, canteen discussions, seminars, debates etc. were recorded through non-participant observation. Similarly, in the market, non-participant observation was resorted to gather data on market dynamics, consumer behaviour etc. However, this method was adequately supplemented by participant observation, as and when required. Later, a careful sociological analysis of the ethnographic accounts was carried out.

2. Interactive Interviews – Interviews are the most widely used methods of gathering data. While attempting to study the two sites, comprehensive interactive sessions were held with the subjects (approximately 50 each in the college and market). These sessions were held in singles, or in small groups during which the subjects gave information about their socio-economic profiles, lifestyles and debated and discussed about various topics of interest like politics, romance, peer relationships, religion and about their views regarding education, modernity, nationalism etc. Here, participant observation was used frequently to help the subjects present their views freely. An attempt was made to regulate the sessions so that the required information could be collected and to ensure that the discussions did not meander away. At times, comprehensive interviews were held with subjects and the interview design was kept unstructured so as not to stem the flow of information. Randomly, some interview sessions were classified to be presented as case studies in order to make the study more interesting and exhaustive and to facilitate qualitative analysis.

Extensive ethnographic studies and interactive interviews were carried out at the two sites of enquiry for a period of 4-5 months. Afterwards, the data were classified and analysed.

3. Secondary sources – In order to have a fair idea of existing literature and the emerging trend in the area of study, secondary sources were resorted to. An intensive overview of books, magazines, journals and relevant newspaper articles contributed significantly to this study.

With the help of these tools, qualitative data on various topics were collected. Since the chief focus of this dissertation is to highlight the experiences, views, aspirations and values of the urban youth and subsequently analyze them sociologically, a conscious attempt has been made not to quantify data. It was felt

that the quantification of the opinions and emotions of the subjects would distort the very purpose of the study. Moreover, the subjects have not been classified on the basis of sex, class, caste, religion, place of origin etc. The idea was that such classification would divert attention from the main purpose of study and would confuse the presentation of the report. While realizing that such variables as caste, income profile etc. are important in studying youth culture, the limited parameters of this work could not make the inclusion of the same possible. Hence, this dissertation simply aims to record the information from the subjects and then contextualize it within the ambit of Sociology in the process of analysis.

During the process of data collection in the two sites of enquiry, namely, the college and the market, the ethnographer had a number of interesting experiences. For one, it was quite a challenge to convince the subjects on the seriousness of the study and to arouse and sustain their interests to participate in discussions on various topics. Many a times, the purpose of the study was not divulged to them in order to elicit unstructured/spontaneous views. During one such encounter where the ethnographer entered into a conversation with a group of subjects casually in the college, the latter demanded free gifts or treats later on saying that this was the way the 'journalists' rewarded them after jotting down their replies. On another occasion in the market, the intentions of the ethnographer were mistaken and the subjects threatened to call security guards if they were further disturbed! What was most enjoyable was the host of interactive interviews. During one such session, a male subject, for the first time, divulged his 'secret' fondness for one of his lady friends. Most of the times, the subjects expressed views and gave opinions which they themselves confessed had not been hitherto discussed with any one else. In all, the field studies were an interesting, learning experience.

However, a number of problems were faced during data collection which became the limitations of this study, as well. Firstly, this study is based on what the subjects said or recounted and most of it could not be validated through first-hand

experience. For example, when the subjects gave information about their family background, the validity of the same could not be ascertained through observation. Secondly, during the interactive sessions, the subjects were influenced by emotions and sentiments which did not provide much scope for empirical verification. Thirdly, since quite a few interviews were held in groups, at times, it was felt that some subjects were wary of disclosing their true feelings. They just 'got along' with what others had to say. Fourthly, since the interviews were largely unstructured for the purpose of acquiring indepth information, at times, the discussions meandered to topics irrelevant to the study. Fifthly, it was, at times, quite difficult to convince the subjects to participate in the interactive sessions/interviews. Lastly, though maximum efforts have been made to check the personal bias of the ethnographer, a hint of the same cannot be totally discounted.

The Dissertation

This study has been compiled into 3 chapters.

In Chapter 1 : Youth Culture in a Changing Social Milieu, we deal with five things. First, we try to conceptualize youth culture as it exists today. Then, we try to ascertain the state of existing research through a succinct review of literature. Subsequently, an attempt is made to situate youth culture in the changing social milieu in India. Later, we analyse the emerging issues with regard to youth culture. And then, the need to substantiate the study through the two sites of enquiry is argued briefly.

In Chapter 2: Culture in a Site of Learning, we deal with a college. At first, a brief ethnographic account of the college is given which encompasses its profile, the different zones of activities, the cultural experiences of the ethnographer which includes a report of everyday observation and interaction. In the next section, 15 biographies/ narratives randomly chosen from the interviews have been presented

in a lucid manner. Finally, the ethnographies and life-histories have been analysed to provide a sociological insight to youth culture.

In Chapter 3 : Culture in a Site of Consumption, a market place has been taken into account. In the first section, a descriptive detail of the market place has been given. An attempt has been made to comprehend the Sociology of the market complex through observation and interaction. In the second section, the culture of the market and within it, the emerging youth culture has been narrated through a series of 14 encounters. In the last section, the qualitative data has been interpreted to understand the new trends of youth culture.

In the conclusion, the information collected from the site of learning and site of consumption have been discussed thoroughly. This gives us a clear picture of the domain of youth culture and emerging areas demanding further research.

CHAPTER – 1

YOUTH CULTURE IN A CHANGING SOCIAL MILIEU

The realization that the social reality has undergone a number of changes in recent years makes it imperative to analyze the changing social milieu and situate the youth culture in it. In order to do this, we first try to understand the concept of 'youth culture'. For a more comprehensive conceptualization, a brief review of existing literature which encompasses the state of existing research has been made. This gives us a fair idea about the various dimensions of the subject which have been studied and about those that still need to be explored. Then, we make an attempt to contextualize youth culture in the changing Indian socio-cultural landscape. The emerging issues in case of youth culture and the changes in the attitudes of youth have then been tackled. Subsequently, the need to locate the sociological enquiry regarding youth culture in two very important sites has been elucidated.

I. Understanding / Conceptualizing Youth Culture

Adolescence, as a collective phenomenon, is nearly universal in the modern world. The term youth has an inclusive connotation and may be described as lifespan based on age criteria combining individual and social character, as a stage beginning with sexual maturation and marked with empirically distinguishable traits. Youth is further defined as the social stratum with incomplete possession of social rights and open life expectations, as a generation of common experience which, at the same time, is conditioned by participation in various strata within the social structure. The youth may also be comprehended as a value concept connoting a vital force and as the source of renewal for the whole society. In this period, the individual is no longer a child but is ready to undertake many attributes of an adult and to fulfil adult roles. But he is not yet fully acknowledged as an

adult, a full member of the society. Rather, he is being 'prepared', or is preparing himself for such adulthood. Youth is also defined as a period of "role moratorium", that is, as a period in which one may play with various roles without definitely choosing any. It does not yet require the various compromises inherent in daily participation in adult life. At the same time, however, since it is also the period when the maximum identification with the values of the society is stressed, under certain conditions, it may be seen as the repository of all the major human virtues and primordial qualities. It may then be regarded as the only age in which full identification with the ultimate values and symbols of the society is attained-facilitated by the flowering of physical vigour.

The transition from childhood and adolescence to adulthood, the development of personal identity, psychological autonomy and self regulation, the attempt to link personal temporal transition to general cultural images and to cosmic rhythms, and to link psychological maturity to the emulation of definite role models- these constitute the basic elements of any archetypal image of youth. Actually, the youth is not a period of 'being' but 'becoming'. The youngster is a creature between childhood- that is, objectivity, the unconscious, natural, dominant receptivity- and adulthood- that is, full subjectivity, individuality, culturality or sociality.

Phenomenologically, youth is a time of alternating estrangement and omnipotentiality. The estrangement of youth entails feelings of isolation, unreality, absurdity and disconnectedness from the interpersonal, social and phenomenological world. Such feelings are probably more intense during youth than in any other period of life. In part, they spring from the actual disengagement of youth from society; in part they grow out of the psychological sense of incongruence between the self and the world.

On the other hand, omnipotentiality is the feeling of absolute freedom, of living in a world of pure possibilities, of being able to change or achieve anything. There may be times when complete self transformation seems possible, when the self is

experienced as putty in one's own hands. At other times, one feels capable of totally transforming another's life, or creating a new society with no roots whatsoever in the mire of the past. Omnipotentiality and estrangement are related: the same sense of freedom and possibility that may come from casting off old inhibitions, values and constraints may also lead directly to a feeling of absurdity, disconnectedness and estrangement.

Another feature of youth is the refusal of socialization and acculturation. At times, the individual may attempt to break out of his prescribed roles, out of his culture, out of history, and even out of his own skin. Youth is a time, then, when earlier socialization and acculturation is self-critically analysed, and massive efforts may be made to uproot the now alien traces of historicity, social membership and culture.

Youth is also marked by the emergence of youth specific identities and roles. These contrast both with the more ephemeral enthusiasm of the adolescent and with the more established commitments of the adult. Though they inspire deep commitment in those who adopt them, they are inherently temporary and specific to youth. Today's youthful hippies, radicals and seekers recognize fully well that they will eventually become older and that aging itself will change their status. Some such youth specific identities may provide the foundation for later commitments; they must be viewed in retrospect as experiments that failed or as probes of the existing society that achieved their purpose, which was to permit the individual to move on in other directions.

The youth place an enormous value upon change, transformation and movement, and the consequent abhorrence of status. To change, to stay on the road, to retain a sense of inner development and/or outer momentum is essential to many youth's sense of active vitality. The psychological problems of youth are experienced as most overwhelming when they seem to block change: thus, youth grows panicky

when confronted with the feeling of 'getting nowhere' of 'being stuck in a rut' or of 'not moving'.

At times, the focus of change may be upon the self and the goal is then to be moved. Thus, during youth we see the most strenuous, self conscious and even frenzied efforts at self- transformation using whatever religious, cultural or therapeutic means available. At other times, the goal is to create movement in the outer world, to move others: then we see efforts at social and political change that in other stages of life rarely possess the same single minded determination. And, on other occasions, the goal is to move through the world, and we may witness a frantic geographic restlessness, wild swings of upward or downward social mobility, or a compelling psychological need to identify with the highest and the lowest, the most distant and apparently alien.

Youth tend to band together with other youth in youthful countercultures, characterized by their deliberate cultural distance from the existing social order, but not always by active political or other opposition to it. For young people, the easiest, most effective way to achieve an identity in a culture that increasingly marginalizes and disregards them is to change their cultural world. By making themselves visible, young people show that they will not merely exist passively in a world that is not their own. They create their own identity, and therefore their own culture, refusing to be seen and treated as 'young adults'.

The physiology of youth can be divided into 3 broad stages:-

1. The early teenage years from age 13-15.
2. The late teens from age 16-19.
3. The last phase from age 20-24.

Youth, as a concept and category, emerged in the wake of industrialization and urbanization which brought about many important social changes. Prior to the

industrial revolution, the concept of the “younger generation” was hardly established. But, the revolution generated and disseminated the adolescent problem more than any other social development in history. The complex division of labour that consequently emerged divorced the place of work from the place of residence; the adult at work became progressively less visible to the young. Formal education and training for future jobs developed as new institutions. Concomitantly, ambiguity arose concerning the status of individuals who found themselves in this interior space. Thus began the era of adolescence.

II. State of Existing Research

When adolescence first emerged as an ideological construct in the late 19th century, many elements of contemporary representations around youth were forged. G. Stanley Hall’s two volume text on ‘Adolescence’¹ is taken as the key moment of ‘discovery’, but Hall was merely a focus for a diverse range of discourses around youth from education, medicine, criminology, child study movements to emerging fields of psychology and psychoanalysis. Hall believed that as an age stage, adolescence is fundamentally sexualized and assumed to be primarily determined by biological forces.

Hall ²advocated a contradictory mixture of freedom and control for the young: freedom would allow adolescents to discover their potentialities and control would be necessary to establish order and discipline.

Battles over freedom and control are to be fought out in the realm of leisure, education, family life, sexuality and waged work but within the adolescent self. Adolescence is represented as a period in which the desire for ‘freedom’

¹ See Griffin, C. (1997), “Troubled Teens: Managing Disorders of Transition and Consumption” in *Feminist Review*, Vol. 55, p. 8-9.

² Ibid.

(especially separation from family of origin) is seen as inevitable, and 'defiance' is assumed to accompany such inevitable desires almost as a matter of course.

J.S. Coleman³ states that the setting apart of the young people in schools – which take on ever more functions, ever more extracurricular activities- for an ever longer period of training has a singular impact on them. The adolescent is cut off from the rest of society, forced inward towards his own age group, made to carry out his whole social life with others of his own age. With his fellows, he comes to constitute a small society, one that has most of its important interactions within itself and maintains only a few threads of connection with the outside adult society. As Coleman puts it, these young people speak a different language. And, the language they speak is becoming more and more different.

Rajendra Pandey⁴ puts forth that there are 3 major approaches to the study of youth culture. They are:

1. Youth culture as contraculture- To the followers of this approach, factors responsible for the emergence of youth culture are inherent in the subordinate and powerless position of youth in the society. Youth culture is viewed as an aftermath of 'normative reaction – formation' to the psycho-social pressures that the society places upon the youth. According to Yinger⁵, the conception of youth culture as contra-culture involves creation of a series of inverse or counter values (opposed to those of surrounding society) in the face of serious frustration or conflict. The sociological conception of youth culture as a contraculture assumes that cultural and structural aspects of youth culture are inextricably linked. Thus, evidence which reveals serious structural discontinuities between generations is also supposed to show a set of youth norms which are opposed to adult values. According to this model, if

³ Coleman, J.S. (1961), *The Adolescent Society*, Illinois: Free Press, p.3.

⁴ Pandey, R. (1984), *Sociology of Youth*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, p. 1-14, (ref. ch. 1)

⁵ Yinger, M. (1950), "Contra-culture and Sub-culture", *Social Research*, Vol. 25(5), p. 626-635.

adolescents substantially accept core adult roles and values, then youth culture is epiphenomenal. But if they doubt the legitimacy of societal values, then youth culture is the appropriate label for this truly rebellious posture. It is generally maintained that in the lifecycle of an individual, the apex of rebelliousness is witnessed during youth. Three main forms of rebelliousness are:

- a. Juvenile delinquency
- b. Radicalism
- c. Bohemianism

But Berger⁴ holds that the contraculture approach excludes those large number of adolescents who had no important experience in anything resembling such a milieu. Many and probably most young persons, while they experience classic problems of adolescent psychology, seem to make their way through full adult status without getting into serious trouble, without a dominating hedonism and without generalized attitudes of rebellion towards parents and the world.

2. Youth culture as a compliant attitude towards problems of socialization in industrial societies – Technological advancement, industrialization and rapid social change led to the emergence of a highly differentiated society and this presents a host of problems and conflicting situations before the youth. This teething problem of socialization in such societies has made men realize that the emergence of culture may be related to processes of industrialization and urbanization, and youth surrounded by such a socio-cultural matrix of modern society tries to be away from childhood and prepare for adulthood, but finds himself bewildered and confused under the dominance of adults.

⁴ Berger, B.M. (1963), "On Youthfulness of Youth Culture" in *Social Research*, Vol. 30(3), p. 319-342.

The youth create a group of their own, which, in turn, gives rise to a set of values and norms that constitute the elements of youth culture. Youth culture thus served as a half way house between a young person's particularistic and universalistic associations.

3. Youth culture as a caricature of adult culture- It is maintained that youth sub-culture is, at least, in part an adoption of adult sentiments and practices to special conditions of youthful dissidence. In a way, Parsons supports this idea.⁵ He says "It is at the point of emergence into adolescence that there first begin to develop a set of patterns of behaviour phenomenon which involve a highly complex combination of age grading and sex role elements. These may be referred together as the phenomena of youth culture. Certain of its elements are present in pre-adolescents and others in adult culture". The basic assumptions of such an explanation could be:

- i. Youth internalizes adult norms and values through processes of socialization by different socializing agencies, which are created, shaped and moulded by adults to their convenience.
- ii. That youth is denied to play the adult role in which he is considered 'not yet worthy of adult role' but who on the other hand, is in pressing need of playing out these roles by virtue of his transition, from childhood to adulthood. Under these circumstances, he turns towards the group of his own creation, wherein he seeks to compensate by playing out those roles which is the ludicrous demonstration of adult characteristics. This imitation of patterns of adult culture is mirrored in youth culture.

But it may be noticed that there develop some unique characteristics of youth culture such as typical language values and patterns of behaviour which are different from adult culture.

⁵ Parsons, T. (1942), "Age and Sex in Social Structure of US" in *American Sociological Review*, Oct., p.610.

Such an approach leads to an apprehension that youth culture is simply an adult culture in miniature which unfortunately it is not.

4. Youth culture as secretive-autonomous entity – Youth culture is constituted of specific elements such as matters of sex, homosexuality, romance and other wayward plans and activities which are distinct and separate from adult culture and values surrounding the society and at the same time, are kept secret and hidden from adult counterparts or other outsiders. The basic assumptions of this explanation are:-

i. There are certain elements which youth maintains as secret, for example, development of sex hormones in them necessitates secret talks. Institutionalized concealment among youth themselves creates certain set of integrated patterns of behaviour which are quite secret and hidden from the rest of the society.

ii. The youth in society occupies a subordinate position which is a universal phenomena. As a consequence, he feels deprived of independent participation and recognition. Under such circumstances, he aligns himself to the group of his own age. Recognition from peers, confidence in his secrecy and satisfaction of unfulfilled longings help develop a set pattern of integrated behaviour which serves as the cultural element of youth culture and provides it the status of a secretive, autonomous entity.

Besides secretive elements, there are some such values, norms and patterns of and for behaviour (such as style of life, language etc.) which are manifest and apparent and are comparatively more important constituent elements of youth culture.

Pandey⁶ feels that a commonly accepted to approach youth culture does not exist. According to him, there is an urgent need for a unified approach which should be

⁶ Pandey, op.cit, p.13.


'all-inclusive' and give a holistic explanation of youth culture in terms of its nature and content.

B. Bradford Brown and R.W. Larson ⁷ believe that youth culture should be visualized in the context of the challenges that young people place on societal institutions and interpersonal interactions. These challenges are reflected in the following recurrent themes:

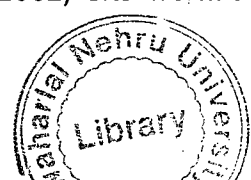
- (a) Susceptibility to political and historic events – Major social changes or protracted political conflicts alter the course of adolescence for many young people. Events suddenly close off opportunities or they can open them up. Adolescents are often drawn into the enmities of their elders in civil or international conflicts. Not only does this bring their adolescence to an abrupt end, but it also affects their sense of identity. On the other hand, it may so happen, as in Russia and Germany, that conflicts may forge a more unified sense of national identity. The crux is that the period of adolescence is anything but a fixed stage of life. When societies go through trauma or change, the young can be both victims and beneficiaries.
- (b) Globalization Vs. Fragmentation – One major current historical issue is the extent to which adolescents are being pulled together into a world community, as opposed to being thrust apart into religious, ethnic, socio- economic or other factions. Brown and Larson observe that more and more youth are growing up in urban environments now, preparing for jobs in capitalist labour markets, extending their education in age graded schools that promote peer relationships outside the family and consuming components of a youth culture features standard elements of dress, grooming and entertainment. As more young people are pulled into, or eagerly embrace a global youth culture, similarities among the world's youth could become more pronounced. In the

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⁷ Brown, B.B., Larson R.W. and Saraswathi, T.S., (ed.) (2002) *The World's Youth*, London: Cambridge University Press, p.12-19.



face of this, those who have limited access to the trappings of this global culture, or who reject it in the face of religious or cultural mandates, may grow more estranged not only from adolescents in other nations but also from age mates in their own country. This could create social tensions as a fractured generation moves into adulthood and attempts to work together as social leaders; it also could enrich a society's diversity and increase sensitivity to social and cultural differences.

(c) Tensions between connection and individualism - Brown and Larson opine that it should not be assumed that the world is converging towards western individualism. In the Arab and South Asian worlds, people, including adolescents, do not experience themselves as separate and autonomous from the family. Family honour remains a crucial motivation to young people in their educational studies, career choices and social pursuits. What actually seems to characterize the current generation of youth is more of a tension between connection and individualism. In some societies, this tension is manifest across different families, with some following a more traditional pattern of interdependence and others breaking away from this. In other cases, the tension is more obvious within the family, as the youth struggles to assert autonomy while also maintaining traditions of interdependence.

(d) Gendered structures of opportunity – According to Brown and Larson, the capacity to pursue particular careers, to engage in various leisure activities, even to exercise authority within family or peer relationships are often more restricted for girls than for boys. In many societies, double standards for sexual expression are obvious; sexual activity among boys is quietly tolerated or sometimes encouraged. Even in cultures with more liberal attitudes toward sexual relationships prior to marriage, boys are generally given more licence than girls. Although such gender gaps have diminished over time for youth of many nations, this is not always the case.

Yogendra Singh⁸ observes that a sub-culture of youth has grown in the metros which celebrates the western style of life. It covers their preference for western food, dress, recreation, art, music, sexual relations and style of living. Yet, this sub-culture is confined mainly to the youth coming from the educated urban middle classes. He further comments that the globalization of economy and decentralization of production of goods and services by multinational corporations have totally altered for these youth, the project of their future and perception of their life world. The 'success theme' has become universal, and the successful performers are the youth who are perceived to have imbibed the western lifestyle to the maximum extent.

According to C. Soares,⁹ some of the ways in which modern day youth groups look for their own niche in a society where the arenas of power are marked out according to purchasing power are :-

- (i) Concern with appearance – A showy display of style becomes an aesthetic trademark defining young people by an image. To some degree, this concern with appearance goes hand in hand with a pronounced theatricality.
- (ii) Rituals and codes – These give young people a feeling of identity and/or a sense of belonging : the former, by providing the possibility of participatory action and the latter, by modifying their behaviour.

Jose M. Pais¹⁰ adds that believing in adventure for the sake of adventure, the youth involve themselves with their friends at every streetcorner of life: speeding on motorbikes, radical sports, practical jokes on teachers, sexual adventures, drug taking etc. It is on these streetcorners of life that youth cultures are celebrated.

⁸ Singh, Y., (2000), *Culture Change in India: Identity and Globalization*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications, p. 118.

⁹ Soares, C., (2000), "Aspects of youth, Transitions and the End of Certainties" in *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 164, p. 214.

¹⁰ Pais, J.M., (2000), "Transitions and Youth Cultures" in *Ibid.*, p. 224.

As far as interactions between parents and the youth are concerned, Inge – Seiffge – Krenke¹¹ observed that during adolescence, there is a change from a unilateral complementary parent-child relationship into one characterized by camaraderie and mutuality. Time spent with parents, family cohesion and closeness definitely decreases even as enduring bonds continue. In early adolescence, the rate of conflict between parents and adolescents increases dramatically expressing the adolescent's instant attempts to be released from parental control and to achieve greater independence and self reliance. From midadolescence on, parents become less directive, for example, the degree of structuring family activities and monitoring the child's activities decreases.

Regarding other forms of interactions, Connolly¹² remarks that in contrast to earlier periods of development, when relationships are largely confined to interactions with friends of the same sex, contacts with cross sex friends increasingly becomes the norm in adolescence. Coincident with this change in friendship patterns is the emergence of romantic relationships. Romantic relationships are characterized by intense feelings of love, longing and excitement. Adolescents' concepts of romantic relationships might be influenced by portrayals of romance in popular media. Also, the adolescents spend a great deal of time talking together about romance and determining norms of behaviour in that context.

V.D. Mishra¹³ conducted a study on youth culture in Lucknow centering around issues like marriage, caste system etc. He found that:-

¹¹ Krenke,I.S.,(1999) "Families with Daughters, Families with Sons: Different Challenges for Family Relationships and Marital Satisfaction?" *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*,Vol. 28(3), p.325-342.

¹² Connolly,J.(1999), " Conception of Cross Sex Friendships and Relationships in Early Adolescence" in *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, Vol. 28(4),p.481-494.

¹³ Mishra,V.D.,(1993), *Youth Culture-A Comparative Study in the Indian Context*,New Delhi:Inter India Publications, see ch.2 and 3.

- Only 23.3% of urban youth prefer arranged marriage. 41.3% prefer self-arranged marriage. This preference of urban youth is due to the choices and suggestions of friends. This indicates that in urban sectors, friends are getting a more important position.
- The urban young think that the most useful size will be a family of 3-4 members. The idea of such a small family finds highest degree of acceptability among urbanites(56%).
- Among urban youth, 9.3% feel like observing caste rituals and 16% observe caste rituals only upto the level of personal convenience. 71.4% of urban youth never practice caste feeling in the matter of making friends and companions.
- 49.3% of urban youth opine that religious rites are not at all desirable. In matters of religion, 4.7% of urban youth vigorously follow rites and the cause is adherence to tradition. In the same category, 1.3% expressed that their observance was because of convenience and 2% seldom observe rites and rituals.
- On politics, Mishra found that 34.6% of urban youth are politically conscious. 59.3% are politically conscious but don't like to participate in party functions. As many as 82.7% of urban youth are not satisfied with functioning of present political leaders.

A brief review of literature indicates that youth, adolescence and related issues have attracted quiet a lot of research in India as well as abroad. But one finds that Indian sociologists have dealt with youth culture and problems in the pre-liberalization phase in great detail. They were concerned with youth movements and also, the emergence and dynamics of rural youth as a potent force. But, there is a paucity of literature on the modern Indian metro youth and the dimensions of their subculture. As a result, we have been largely unable to unravel the true nature

of their attitudes and values, clear certain misconceptions and validate a few others.

III. Youth Culture in the Changing Social Milieu In India

While attempting to study the metro youth culture, the changing Indian social reality and contemporary cultural landscape needs to be taken into consideration. The theoretical framework underlying the study of contemporary urban youth in India can be related to 3 main ideas:

(i) Growth of middle class.

(ii) A greater change introduced due to liberalization, privatization and globalization.

(iii) And finally, as a result of above processes, the pervading effect of modernization on the youth.

(i) Growth of middle class – In India, the origins of middle class derive not so much from an industrial revolution as from colonial rule. It was colonial rule that created the modern office – the habitat of white collar worker or ‘babu’ and the modern professions such as law, journalism, medicine and engineering. It also established the first modern universities, law colleges, the medical colleges and engineering colleges to provide training and certification for entry into middle class occupations.

One cannot pinpoint any single criterion for defining the middle class. Occupational function and employment status are the two most significant criteria, although education and income are also widely used. Typically, middle class occupations are non-manual ones. The middle class consists predominantly of employees although it also includes self employed persons and a sprinkling of small employers. Today, the core of the new middle class consists of men and women who work in offices or similar locations in non-

manual occupations that require some degree of formal education. The economic and political significance of this class in all modern societies is beyond dispute.

The Indian middle class has grown steadily in size in the last fifty years. Although still a minority in the population, it is no longer a miniscule minority. The liberalization package, tailored to make India a player in the 'global' economy suddenly put the spotlight on the middle class for an entirely new reason: its ability to consume. In other words, the economic liberalization that has been sweeping across the country for the last few years has altered the lives of a large section of India's burgeoning middle class. They have become far more international in their outlook and aspirations, more sophisticated and liberal in lifestyle and attitudes.

The sociology of the new middle class in India can be best understood by highlighting the following issues :-

- (a) Moral ambiguity– At present, different and often contradictory ideologies form part of the urban middle class life world. The people often experience living with diversity as problematic but these problems are accepted as a part of life. Life in urban middle class makes it almost imperative for people to engage with ideologies that are connected with the worlds of consumption, education and social reform. People engaging with different ideologies may not identify with either one fully but acknowledge their force within their own social world. There is a constant awareness that one needs to deal with people or institutions that stand for ideas and a lifestyle that go against those of oneself.
- (b) Consumption and morality – For many middle class people, modernity stands for the advent of wealth and a lifestyle defined by consumption, not just of goods that have invaded the Indian market in the past few years but

of all the goods – especially those goods that used to be coveted by the parents and grandparents of today's middle class. Many feel that they have entered a new era, with a way of life thoroughly different from that of even their own youth. The experience is not only economic, it also has cultural and moral implications. Though many have embraced the new wealth and consumption that made it possible, the experience is very problematic since the established morality argues against consumption.

Before the advent of this new era, life was relatively simple. The range of goods present in the lives of earlier generations was limited and desires were in tune with that reality. Now, the presence of wealth and a much wider array of goods have made for a new standard of consumptive patterns. A new trend that is being noticed is that many in middle class perceive upward mobility combined with the advent of new styles of consumption – as the defining character of modernity. A person who is able to successfully consume new goods that have entered the Indian market gets stamped as modern successfully in the modern world.

The two main paths to status are morality and the modern path of wealth and consumption. In this dyad, morality stands uncontested as superior and more legitimate one. Almost always, people expressly show their loyalty to morality, while at the same time, acknowledging that reality of the society is a different one.

- (c) Importance of education – Throughout middle class, we find a strong orientation towards individual economic and professional achievement, which is considered to be the most important source of economic security. In view of the middle class, a professional career based on higher education offers the best chance for achieving a satisfactory standard of living. Then, it is widely accepted that only some courses really offer lucrative opportunities; it is engineering, medicine or science that one

should opt for in order to be on the safer side. Academic degrees that lead to a high pay are supposed to impart people with the legitimacy needed to engage in certain forms of consumption and certain forms of contestations of established morality, in family life as well as outside of it.

Education is not just a tool for access to urban white-collar labour market and a prestige booster. Education is also associated with lifestyle and provides a sense of social identity. Those of the middle class who embrace this sense of identity, associate education with changes in mentality and established forms of sociability.

In India, the prime reason why mastery of English is considered important is the common conviction that attractive and well paying white-collar jobs are only accessible to those who speak English. English is also the language associated with the prestige of upper class. A prestige that many would like to experience. Therefore, those who have received their education in English medium schools carry an aura of modernity. This aura of modernity, because of its association with the upper class, is an aura of superiority.

Since education occupies such a predominant position among the middle class, parents do not simply wait for their children to soak up the cultural capital ¹⁴ that is a part of the domestic environment. They take an increasingly active part in their education and training. Middle class parents have become increasingly career conscious and this consciousness is ingrained in the children at a young age. They have begun to feel that they can't leave it entirely to school/college to train their wards for success in competitive exams. They enthusiastically help their children with their lessons at home. But they do not rely entirely on their own abilities to

¹⁴ Cultural capital comprises of knowledge, skills, tastes, etc. that are a part of its distinctive way of life

prepare their children for success in exams. Where they have the means, they engage tutors or send their children to coaching classes.

This intense involvement of parents in the education of their wards and their craze for technical degrees have been major factors in the sudden spurt of a number of private educational institutions. These institutions offer technical courses (that is, BBA, MBA, BCA, MCA, fashion designing etc.) which are primarily oriented towards the job market. Even, in their advertisements, the most prominently displayed item is the claim to secure 100% job placement for their students. A diploma from a foreign university, affiliation to foreign institutes, distinguished teaching faculty with 'foreign' degrees, summer training abroad etc. are a few of the numerous lucrative offers made by the private institutions. In return, they demand hefty fees. It is generally found that the middle class parents try to save as much as they can in order to fund their children's education in these universities in case they do not get admission into the government institutions. Though the parents do realize that they are being fleeced by the private institutions, they nevertheless pay up for the sake of the future of their children.

- (d) Decline of joint family – Members of middle class hold joint family to be a thing of the past. It is not that the westernized concept of nuclear family has completely taken over; parents often do live with an adult son, his wife and children. People feel that they have undergone a process of social and cultural change so thorough that the joint family has been wiped out.

The middle class understands the supposed decline of joint family as 'abduction'. What is abducted is a 'good old age' and also a 'known self'. Seen as responsible for this abduction is the west, or modernity that have imposed an alien form of family living.

The ideal of joint family living that ethnographies in sixties and seventies showed people to be struggling with was that of brothers living together under the same roof, sharing the same property and united in their (mostly) agricultural pursuits. Then the threat to joint family was the separation of brothers. At present, the issue of brotherly fission is, at least in urban middle class, not the cause for disintegration of joint family. The issue of tension the middle class now deals with at present is not that of brothers and their unison, but that of parents and their sons remaining together. The problem rises from younger generation's unwillingness to give their elders their due. When elders speak of injustice inflicted upon them by the young, they often refer to an imposed marginality at home. Urban middle class sons have jobs and incomes of their own and elders lack of economic power in relation to their son is at the heart of their understanding of their marginal position at home.

Mostly, parents lose out because of present cultural changes. Young men and women are engaged in the pursuit of a modern lifestyle in which the couple's enjoyment of life together takes primacy over established morality that tells sons to be loyal to their parents and daughters –in-law to know their place.

- (e) Love marriage and Caste exogamy –On the question of marriage, most middle class parents today take into account the possibility of an inter-caste marriage as being an unfortunate eventuality but one they could handle. Here, the central notion is that of compromise – ideals of caste endogamy do exist, but are compromised for a range of reasons that are connected with conditions of urban middle class life.

There are a number of factors parents take into consideration when they think of compromising on the ideal model of arranged marriage within the caste. The spread of the idea that young people may play a role in the selection of their

spouse is one of them. But ideas about decreasing significance of social control, especially by caste community, are also important. The incongruence between politically correct utterances and politically incorrect practices with regard to caste can be related to the socio-cultural predicament of many members of urban middle class, who are on one hand, rooted in community practices but have also been thoroughly exposed to ideas that negate these practices as obsolete and undesirable.

Among the urban middle class, it is commonly understood that social control within castes has greatly decreased over the past decades. About the possibility of children marrying out of caste, the middle class feels that it should not be made a prestige issue. Parents often also acknowledge that they and their children live in a changing society where caste exogamy is not the social crime it used to be.

- (f) Support to Hindu nationalism – The development of a specific urban middle class culture in India is related to the rise of Hindu nationalist movement that took place in the late eighties and early nineties. The Hindu nationalist ideology preaches a modernized Hinduism as national religion and seeks to build a strong and unified Hindu nation on its basis. In discussions in newspapers, magazines and scholarly publications in India, support among urban middle class for Hindu nationalism is often accorded special significance. It has been suggested that middle class support for Hindu nationalism is indicative of a development of a modern middle class culture that merges modernization and communal identity.

The people of the urban middle class, who have been more or less uprooted from their native pockets are filled with a vague sense of insecurity. And, they find the dynamics of urban life quite puzzling and unsettling. Moreover, they feel bewildered by the new socio-economic forces of change. They are caught in a dilemma in which they try to retain old values / ideologies while incorporating the new ones. Most of the time, they are unable to negotiate between

the two and are faced with an identity crisis. At this juncture, the ideas of religious revivalism appear quite appealing since they not only reinforce their old identities but also give them a mission in life. Bombarded by the ideas of the west and experiencing some kind of anomie in the cities, the middle class seeks refuge in nationalism or more specifically, Hindu nationalism. The redefinition of key terms like nation, state, religion etc. by the Hindu nationalists captures the imagination of the urban Hindus who think of it as a weapon to assert their Indianness, their cultural superiority.

Rajni Kothari ¹⁵ argues that it is within the middle class of the present, bound up as it is with modern consumerism, that one finds an upsurge of Hindu nationalism which he sees as converging with the homogenizing thrust of globalization. In his view, middle classes are at once nationalist and global, combining an ideology of economic privatization with religious nationalism.

A study of the dynamics of the new, urban middle class shows the various ways in which it is attempting to negotiate with the changing socio-economic circumstances and its own changed social standing. In order to understand the changes better, we need to focus on the forces of liberalization, privatization and globalization and their effects upon the emerging middle class.

(ii) A greater change introduced due to liberalization, privatization and globalization— The triad of liberalization, privatization and globalization have effected major changes in the society, especially in the values, attitudes and orientations of the urban middle class.

Since the 1980s, the government has been gradually abandoning the earlier state perspective in the economy that was led by an ideal of self reliance. In 1991, the economic policy of the government ushered in liberalization of the economy and advocated disinvestment and privatization of the public sector.

¹⁵ Kothari.R.,(1989),*Politics and the People*,Delhi:Ajanta Publications,p.72.

In effect, state controls on production were lifted and India opened up to foreign investors which resulted in a considerable increase in availability of a wide array of consumer goods on Indian market. Simultaneously, there has been a fast spread of exposure to commercial TV. Numerous TV channels now beam in Indian homes images of lifestyles and ideas prevalent in various parts of the world, especially, the west. In other words, the liberalization package and the media boom have brought globalization to our doorstep. Needless to say, the urban middle class has been most susceptible to the influence of these forces.

Amidst the different sources of identity that are involved in middle class' dealings with modernity and globalization, there is one set of ideas that has the privileged status of being understood as tradition. What can be placed in this category are ideals of honour, duty, respect for elders, moral uprightness, self restraint in consumption and performance of social duty. The experience of globalization and construction of identities in the present are closely connected with these; in effect much of what people hold to constitute 'Indian values' has been identified as such through confrontations with 'things' modern or western.

One of those 'things' is modern consumer culture that has been introduced to India especially, since the advent of liberalization policies and is seen as competing with established morality as a source of identity. Many in the middle class perceive upward economic mobility -combined with the advent of new styles of consumption – as the defining character of modern life. Middle class status demands a level of consumption in tune with the times: the raised expectations that upward mobility and new consumer styles have brought. But through consumption, mentalities are also communicated. For example, through dress, hairstyle and make-up and accompanying

comportment and speech style, a woman communicates things about her class, background, her degree of education etc.

As a result, an individual family tries to make an optimum use of economic resources at its disposal to acquire a maximum rank score in cumulative terms in order to achieve a higher status at cognitive level. The use of various consumption symbols tends to inculcate increasing dependency upon such symbols which in turn govern the lifestyle of their owners. The informal socialization process in the family and peer groups tends to generate a tendency to transmit these stratified cultural patterns to successive generations, thus leading to a proliferation of consumerism.

But, it will be wrong to assume that global interconnectedness brought about through new forms of political organization, global capitalism, media and migration has led to cultural homogenization. The analyses of global spread of consumer styles and goods often stress people's creativity and appropriation of styles and goals which are thus fitted into local culture. The idea of local populations 'appropriating' or 'indigenizing' globally spread goods and ideas in their society has been widely accepted. Some scholars feel that globalization does not destroy cultural differences, but can even reinforce people's sense of cultural differences. According to Roland Robertson,¹⁶ globalization brings with it a globally spread development of particular identities that are in large degree constructed on a trans or super local basis and get to be expressed in terms of generalized recipes of locality, community, home etc. This theory can help us to understand the development of forms of communal identity that are essential to the modern world such as nationalism, as for example, the growth of Hindu nationalism among the middle class.

¹⁶ Robertson, R., (1995), "Glocalization- Time-space and Homogeneity – Heterogeneity" in *Global Modernities*(ed.), p.25-44.

Ashis Nandy ¹⁷ thus connects the advent of Hindu nationalist ideology with the development of a middle class shaped through globalizing influences.

A study of the evolution of the new urban middle class in India and its negotiation with the forces of liberalization, privatization and globalization prepares the ground for situating the contemporary metro youth culture within the changing cultural landscape.

(iii) The pervading effects of modernization on youth – In the nineties, the advent of privatization, liberalization and globalization brought about a radical change in the outlook, orientation and cultural practices of the youth. All this is most evident in the various metropolises of the country which happen to be the hub of cultural hybridity. Unlike India's midnight children who grew up on Gandhism, stable governments, the virtues of saving, the economics of moderation and a pronounced techno-phobia, for today's youth, governments mean shaky single parties or coalitions of convenience, economics means a guiltless consumerism and added to these, are the open markets and the global Indian presence. The changed attitude of the youth and the orientation of their sub-culture are to a great extent influenced by the modern family structure and mass media.

In the urban industrial setting of Indian metros, the joint family has more or less given way to the nuclear family. A joint family not only had more members but also their behaviour and work performance were more visible, thereby providing a choice of role models to the younger generation in the family. Also, the socio-cultural milieu of the young and old was similar. But, in a nuclear family there is normally only one adult member of each sex represented and if this parent is not readily observable, the young are deprived of role models. Moreover, in this age, besides suffering from a general

¹⁷ Nandy.A., (1991) "Hinduism Vs. Hindutva. The Inevitability of a Confrontation' in The Times of India, Feb. 18, p.18.

cultural lag, parents also suffer from specific knowledge lags, for it is virtually impossible for them to keep up with the latest information provided by fast moving science and technology.

As a result, peer association substitutes association with clan members. Over time, this body of peers evolve into an influential collectivity forming a corporate identity. This substitution is thorough and includes fulfilment of emotional needs essential for individual growth such as stimulation, opportunity for role playing, identification, sharing of guilt and anxiety. Thus, the peer group is one of the major contributors to the evolution of a youth subculture.

The other contributor is mass media especially, TV. After the cosmetic makeover of home grown TV channels and the advent of foreign ones in the early nineties, we find a new and profound change in our TV programmes that is closely intertwined with the western way of life, with an acquisitive and consumerism – oriented culture of post-industrial society. TV, in its quest to produce audiences and make money, has rightly fathomed the immense potentiality of the youth. Since they exert an indelible impression not only on their own sub-society but also the society at large, the motto of TV companies has been to ‘catch them young’. Increasingly, we find TV channels, movies and commercial advertisements specially being of, for and by the youth. Needless to say, they not only shape the orientations of the youth but also get reflected by them.

IV. Youth Culture : Emerging Issues

The changes in the attitudes of youth can be studied in and around the following fields:

- (i) Emancipation from established thought – It is common to find in today’s middle class, especially the young, an ideal of emancipation from

established thought. Young people of both sexes take their mentalities as enlightened and liberated from the clutches of irrationality and obsolete practices. Young people also embrace ideas like openness, frankness, freedom of speech and straightforwardness. These words stand for a new mode of social interaction that breaks the principles of respectfulness and propriety. They are about having a voice within the family and about breaking family authority structures and challenging values that their families expect them to live by. They are also about leading an aspect of life outside the precincts of the family, the world of education and jobs and about new ways of social interaction, particularly for girls and women.

Now, the values and ideas that parents live by are questioned by youngsters. According to the young, generation gap stems from the idea that older people tend to take their way of life for granted, whereas young people reflect on their way of life and seek change if they deem it necessary.

We find that the 'limited life' of parents in which all was 'regular and routine' is challenged by the young people. Communication with elders is sought and through that, power relations are challenged. Sometimes, young people do succeed: now a youngster can sometimes advise someone who is older; now a girl can sometimes express her ideas about her marriage. According to the young, traditions cannot guide how one should lead one's life. A person's own insights should fulfil that guiding role. There are many fields in which young people find themselves confronting elders who seek to adhere to traditions that do not come with sufficient justification as far as these young people are concerned.

Although many young people do challenge the morality and cultural ideas of elders, they often look upon their cultural identity as a sign of being in touch with the world and with the times. This being 'in touch' is not a

matter of separation from, or resistance to local culture, but rather an identification with a more 'global' sense of modernity.

Young people often acknowledge that there were important areas of tension between them and their elders. They feel that an important difference between them and people of older generations was that they were reflexive with regard to culture whereas the latter were not. At the same time, while many young people do identify with modernity and make clear that reflexivity, reason and individualism shape their world views in many ways, they also make clear that they continue to acknowledge established morality.

- (ii) Changed attitude towards education/career/success- Pavan K. Varma¹⁸ aptly remarks that the middle class has had to bear the brunt of a rapidly changing society in which restraining traditions have been offloaded in a single minded pursuit of plenty. The pressures begin to mount on a youngster even as a toddler. The child is under tremendous pressure to do well in school for he knows that unless he does so, entry to a preferred college for a professional course will be very difficult. On the other hand, the consumerist messages from society, and especially TV, are relentless. The youngsters are growing up with a single minded focus on acquiring the objects of desire, and are willing to orient their lives almost exclusively towards this end.

To the youth, education means access to 'cool jobs' and to 'cool cash'. Career counsellor, Pervin Malhotra¹⁹ comments that jobs with long gestation periods are becoming passé for the upwardly mobile youth in the metros are becoming more adventurous; they are willing to experiment with new kinds of jobs rather than stick with the old and the

¹⁸ Varma, P.K., (1998), *The Great Indian Middle Class*, Delhi: Viking Publishers, p.53.

¹⁹ Malhotra, P., (2004), in "Young Republic", *The Sunday Times Of India*, Jan.25, p.10.

traditional. The most sought after jobs are in the call centres, in advertising, travel and tourism. The only thing today's youngsters look for while choosing a career is money. To them, happiness means money.

Now, making money has increasingly become a legitimate route to success for the young people. They are willing to take risks with their savings either by starting new business or spending on durable goods. And, in order to attain success, they do not mind making compromises, cutting corners and putting self before others. In the success theme, 'I' has become powerful at the cost of 'We'. 'Personal' is all powerful and 'social' is losing its significance and meaning.

(iii) Culture of consumerism – In the urban metro society, the middle and upper echelons have huge amounts of accumulated surplus and consequently, a considerable purchasing capacity. This is resulting in a peculiar, lavish lifestyle and an uncultivated vulgar display of non-functional symbols. In such a milieu, young people are drawn into the consumer market at an early age. According to management consultants KSA Technopak, the annual spending power of the young consumer in India is \$10.5 billion and this is rising at a rate of 12% every year.²⁰

As a consequence of its conditioning into and participation in the consumerist ethos oriented and class stratified urban cultural system, the consumption needs artificially created and reinforced by the dominant macro-level socio-cultural matrices of urban youth are much higher than its capacity to afford these. Since life is equated with having, not having or not being able to afford certain things and commodities means lagging behind. This is the beginning of a neurotic restlessness for new things, new fashions and new images. In other words, the psycho-cultural dependence of the youth upon the dominant macro-cultural system is almost complete.

²⁰ Ibid.

For the highly individualistic youth, hugely individualistic shopping, insatiable desires and instant gratification is the buzzword.

(iv) Changing orientation towards caste and religion – The role of caste and religion in adolescents' lives today is quite complex. The traditional, parochial and particularistic identities represented by caste, kinship and religion have moved towards a more universalistic framework for the urban youth. Youth is confronted with a wider variety of reality defining agencies that compete for his allegiance or at least attention, but none of which is in a position to coerce him into allegiance. Put differently, secularization has resulted in widespread weakening of the plausibility of religious norms. The constitutional proclamation of secularism, mass communication, greater exposure to media, higher education and questioning spirit etc. have caused youth to be uncertain about religious and caste matters. In other words, the young in India are caught in a conflict of values or in a cultural crisis. This is apparent in the emergence of a sector of youth population, which has a mobile, urban way of living and which finds its fundamental values, aspirations and career structure in sharp conflict with the values and practices of the past.

In elite educational institutions, caste status is likely to become ambiguous. But, the most important thing is that the school system creates fundamental cleavages within each caste. Those who have been to public schools and reputed colleges are privileged people and on the whole, they tend to be acutely conscious of their exclusive status. They form status groups of a new kind which cut across caste. As Beteille ²¹ points out, Brahmins, Kayasthas, Nairs coming from such institutions are likely to feel closer to each other socially than to their respective caste fellows who have

²¹ Beteille, A., (1969), *Castes: Old and New - Essays in Social Structure and Social Stratification*, New York: Asia Publishing House, p.211.

managed, at best, to pass out of vernacular schools and colleges in some small town or village. For the urban youth in cosmopolitan cities like Bombay and Delhi, it is more important to belong to a smart set than to have been born into the highest caste.

But this is not always the case. A majority of the youth who feel deprived of a host of opportunities at the cost of minorities, entrenched groups etc. envisage the need to aggressively reassert their primordial identities. On the other hand, the youth of the minority groups also resort to primordial sentiments related to language, religion, caste, ethnicity and regionalism in order to demand and acquire their rightful place in the society.

(v) New orientation towards politics - The youth, in general, feel betrayed by the many political events during the past decade. The decline in political values of men in public life, the preference for patronage to merit in public services and enterprises, the increasing rate of criminalization of politics have fostered a new orientation towards politics.

Increasingly, the feeling of the urban youth is that in politics, the old guard should definitely go as they have proved they cannot do much for the country. They should make way for the younger politicians. According to them, the essential qualities of the new age politician should be an ability to reduce corruption, fulfil promises, have more proximity to the common man, charisma and better dress sense. In politicians, the youngsters are looking for vision, a clean reputation and a bit of idealism. Of course, ideology in its truest sense, does not matter any more. One could be right, left, and centrist as long as he/she could deliver, modernize and make the nation move ahead. The young voters are performance oriented: they want that their concerns are not only verbally addressed, but there is action and accountability on the ground as well. In all, the youth feel that a younger,

smarter and less corrupt set of politicians should dominate the Indian political scene today.

(vi) Changed attitude towards romantic relationships and marriage – Now-a-days, the relatively free interactions between sexes in schools and local university campuses make it easier than ever for girls and boys to get romantically involved with each other. In the field of romance, films are a major and much sought after life experience of youngsters, cutting across class and gender. They imitate the young heroes and heroines in dress and hairstyles and in romantic love affairs.

But, their attitude towards romantic relationships has undergone a change. They have become much more pragmatic and realize that love might not always lead to marriage; they are willing to experiment with partners and do not believe in a 'single relationship for life'. Youngsters feel much more free to talk about love, sexuality etc. They do not mind an outward demonstration of affection and feel that in a relationship, there should be complete 'physical and mental compatibility'. Moreover, the youth do realize that in this fast-paced world, love can't be taken for granted. Guys especially have become much more sensitive and thoughtful and do make quite a lot of effort to make a relationship work. In all, both boys and girls are quite 'cool' about love and romance. They do think of a future together but would prefer to live very much in and for the present.

The ideas of love and romance make the young people eager to choose their own life partners. This is because they think that self selection of partner makes it possible to get to know her/him before deciding about marriage. Youth feel that they are much better able to find a person who could be a match to their personality- a person who would share their likes and dislikes and thinking. Through personal selection, potential partners' true character and strong and weak points become known. Today, the

preference is for a love marriage because today, the youth place great importance on the quality of conjugal relationship.²² Considerations of endogamy, family status and dowry are gradually being replaced by personal happiness, level of education, physical attractiveness and personality characteristics. As Khatri²³ points out, there is an emergent trend of selection of marriage partner by the person concerned, based on love and with or without the consent of family elders.

Accordingly to youngsters, arranged marriage is a very risky game. One gambles with one's life. In a thirty minute talk, one can easily pretend and afterwards, that can create problems. Thus, many couples live a life devoid of love and mutual understanding. On the other hand, love marriage is marriage with deeper understanding.

But still, there are many boys and girls who prefer arranged marriage for they feel that parents would be better able to choose a partner than they would. They think that arranged marriage is the proper and right way of getting married.

Retrospecting on these and various related issues, Shiv Vishwanathan²⁴ thus sums up the characteristics of today's youth:-

- ❖ More honest, cosmopolitan and tolerant in a middle class way. Their motto is to make it big quickly.
- ❖ Speed is ethics for them. They don't have big ideologies. Most of their ideology is drawn from management practices
- ❖ More open to sexuality and less hypocritical about consumerism.

²² A marriage shaped by a matching of personalities of 2 partners.

²³ Khatri, M.A., (1970), " Personality and Mental Health of Indians in the Context of their Changing Family Organization' in Anthony, E.J. and Koupernik, C. (eds) *The Child in his Family*, New York: Wiley Publications, p.318-412.

²⁴ Op.cit., no.27.

At present there are almost 555 million Indians under the age of 25 who are charting a whole new course of the nation. Of course, the young people today constitute a very heterogeneous group, especially in the urban metros where people from various religions, castes, regions and ethnicity co-exist. Peculiarly, the youth hailing from diverse backgrounds get together to give rise to a subculture that is exclusively their own. The youth subcultures give the young people the chance to express their difference from the rest of the society, yet coexist within it. More importantly, they enable young people to find their own individual identity, yet still have the support of group solidarity.

The major dimensions of the youth subculture are :-

- Young people have derived from their interaction a peculiar set of norms and values that no longer consists of child standards nor appears to be a part of the adult world.
- They speak an argot that is not shared with adults. In fact, it is only partially understood by outsiders and is often unacceptable to the establishment.
- Youth's channels of mass communication operate by mingling in youth 'ghettos' (high schools/colleges) and through their own programmes via, the general media (TV, newspapers, radio etc.)
- The youth acquire a primary group feeling towards the peer group in which they are accepted as total individuals.
- Youth derive status relationships that make them predictable in peer interaction. Peer group also provides criteria and models that allow emulation during a time in which models in the adult society are lacking or are too frightening.
- The mantra guiding the youth is instantness in all areas of life. For the majority of the young, deferment of gratification is as odious as it is odd and is a "hang up" of the old; immediate gratification is 'natural' and thus a righteous demand.

V. Location of the Enquiry

In such a scenario, this study on urban Indian youth and the culture they spawn assumes relevance. The modern Indian youth of the 21st century are very different from their parents and are nothing like their predecessors of the seventies. The society has different expectations from them and they have a host of brand new material and cultural resources to enter into a dialogue with their environs which they use in ways new to both the society and social scientists alike. If anything, they borrow elements from the west in terms of food, music, morality etc. which is quite different from the ones jealously upheld by the preceding generations. At the same time, they subconsciously retain values that are definitely Indian.

In order to acquire an indepth understanding of the dynamics of urban youth culture in contemporary times, I have tried to situate youth culture in two sites of enquiry- a site of learning and a site of consumption, my field being Delhi city.

College, as a site of learning, has been chosen as an arena of enquiry for it is felt that it is one of the prime locations for the evolution and proliferation of youth culture. Vis- a- vis school, college is more impersonal, less cohesive and less regulative. There is no fostering of affiliative systems. In the absence of visible authority and direct interaction with it, the individual is left unto himself to deal with the vast uncharted world of peers. He is left unto himself to choose a lifestyle of his own. The freedom he aspired for and obtained in the college comes as something unknown. It opens doors and creates a sense of exhilaration and at the same time, makes him feel insecure and shaky. College years are the period when many issues contend for the youth's attention; what to wear, what friendships to keep, what time to come home, on what to spend money on, what career to choose, whom to marry etc.

Considering the crucial importance of college in the life of youth, an attempt has been made to undertake a comprehensive ethnographic study of a college in Delhi

in order to discover the process of evolution and various tenets of contemporary youth culture.

The second arena of enquiry is Priya market complex, a site of consumption. In the changing cultural landscape of the metros, the market is of great sociological importance. It is a symbol of aggressive marketing of producers as well as the insatiability of the acquisitive desires of the consumers. And, as mentioned before, consumerism is the backbone of modern youth culture. While attempting to study youth culture in a very urbane market place, the 'culture of youth' propagated by the market will also be studied. As Berger²⁵ points out, youth culture should refer to the normative system of youthful persons, not necessarily of young ones only. Here, through an ethnographic study of the market place, the impact on and relevance of definitive characteristics of youth culture to groups other than the age grade called adolescence will also be studied.

It is felt that an enquiry of these two very different, but complementary sites, one of learning and another of consumption, would give a very comprehensive idea of youth culture the epitome of which has evolved in the superurbanized and industrialized metros and which finds expression in potent socio-cultural sites like the college and the market place.

²⁵ op.cit.no.12,p.320.

CHAPTER – 2

CULTURE IN A SITE OF LEARNING

We have already discussed about the Sociology of youth culture. In this chapter, we intend to locate this culture in a concrete social milieu. This is the reason why we have chosen a leading college in Delhi. A college is an interesting social site in which a sociologist/cultural anthropologist can find multiple dimensions of youth sub-culture-their engagement with education, career and vocation, the network of relationships, peer group culture, construction of gendered identities, political articulation and other beliefs and practices. To begin with, we have done a brief ethnographic account of the college. This everyday sociological observation has enabled us to get an idea of the culture prevalent among the students. Second, in order to have a deeper understanding, we have chosen specific biographies and life histories. These narratives give us a fair idea about how this generation thinks, acts and lives, the ambiguities, complexities and dilemmas of the generation. And finally, this qualitative data has been analysed and interpreted and we have tried to examine whether a social trend as far as youth culture is concerned is emerging.

I. College and its Everyday Rhythm : An Ethnographic Account

To conduct our ethnographic study in a site of learning, we have chosen Sri Venkateswara (SV) College, University of Delhi, South Campus. This college was founded in 1961 by Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams. Since then, the institution has been engaged in the task of imparting multi-dimensional education to its students. The college has been in focus because of its excellent record in academics, research, extra curricular activities, sports and social service. It has 19 departments offering 21 courses. There are about 130 teachers for about 2300 students. In SV college, the sex ratio of students is slightly in favour of girls - the ratio of girls to boys is 60:40 approximately.

The architecture of SV College is impressive without being imposing. The wide corrugated gates of the college open up to a great expanse of lawns and the huge 3 storeyed yellow and red main building. The latter houses a bustling entrance hall, the administrative section, Students Union office, various departments, classrooms, library, laboratories, faculty common room, galleries, a SBI counter etc. Besides, there is the aesthetically constructed canteen which has trees, gardens and sheds in abundance and is very popular with the students. Though one of the most populated hang-outs of the college, it is surprisingly clean and well maintained. In fact, the same can be said for the entire college. What is striking is that a concerted attempt has been made to make the environs pleasant and vibrant. Juxtaposed with numerous plant pots, vines and climbers are colourful notice boards having attractive wall magazines, sketches etc. on them.

While the ambience inspires creativity in the student, there is the huge college library to channelise his/her scholastic aptitudes. Located in the ground floor, the library has 3 sections-each devoted to Science, Humanities and Commerce. There is also a periodical section with the latest journals, magazines and newspapers (national as well as regional). The reading room has a sitting capacity of 100-150 students and remains open during the college hours. To ensure that the library caters to the needs of the students to the optimum, there is a committee comprising of students, teachers and the college administrators which recommends on matters like procurement of books, study materials, maintenance etc. What is laudatory is that the college library has been fully computerized – library data, issue and return of books can be accessed to by a click only. Moreover, the library provides free internet facilities to students to enable them to have access to study materials on the web portals. Here, one comes face to face with the seriousness of the students regarding their studies. At any point of time, almost all the chairs in the library are occupied. The students are found to be either poring over class notes or hunting for reference materials. According to some students, the library is a very ‘cool’

place to revise, finish home tasks etc. so that the after college hours could be spent with friends. The librarians also commented that students, especially from Science and Humanities, thronged the library. Apart from the course and reference books, what appeared to be in great demand were the autobiographies/biographies of famous personalities. As a female student put it, these works are not only entertaining but also educative since they show the road to success. These books had to be 'booked' well in advance at the counter. Apart from the regular activities, the students enjoyed surfing the internet in the library. Sometimes, the teachers came along with the students to search for the necessary references and sites on the net. Also, many youngsters frequently checked out the opportunities that could be availed in foreign universities and many were properly updated about colleges/institutes abroad and the facilities, scholarships etc. they provide.

To promote excellence in sports, SV College, in association with Sonnet Cricket Club, maintains a good college playground. The cricket pitch that has been laid out is of an international standard and is acclaimed as one of the best in Delhi. The desirous students are also provided with coaching facilities. Apart from cricket, the college has also provided for a basketball court, football field and a tennis/ badminton court, all of which are well cared for. To boost the spirits of students excelling in sports, the college has instituted the Balaji Sports Scholarships.

In order to let the students participate in the plans pertaining to the all round developmental activities of the college, there is a Students Union comprising of six office bearers, namely President, Vice President, Secretary, Joint Secretary and two Central Councillors. The elections to the Students Union are held in the month of September every year and party politics is not encouraged at this level. For better co-ordination between the students and staff, a faculty member is appointed as the staff advisor to the Students Union.

The Students Union and Fine Arts Association jointly organize the inter college cultural extravaganza of SV College called 'NEXUS' in the third week of December every year. This festival has been widely acknowledged as a very prestigious inter-college cultural festival of the Delhi University and a platform where the students from different colleges and universities participate and compete in 23 different events like photography, painting, classical dance etc. Weeks before the actual event, hectic preparations are made by the students and administration in compiling the guest list, preparing for various events and in other particulars. No wonder, the festival is regarded as the most exciting event of the academic year.

SV college has a number of associations to tune the multifaceted talents of the students. Of the 22 odd societies/associations, the prominent ones are:-

- Fine Arts Association – Apart from organizing the college festival, the Fine Arts Association is involved in presenting Hindi and English plays from time to time. It also arranges for the participation of the college students in various 'inter-college festivals' of the university. Moreover, it organizes 'Insight', an annual exhibition of paintings, photographs and crafts.
- Debating Society – This society appears to be the favourite of many students and its members have earned a number of laurels. Three students of this society represented the college at the Asian Debate Competition organized by Mahidol University in Bangkok, Thailand. It organizes the Annual English Debate Competition 'Metaphor'. In 2003, 'Metaphor' was sponsored by Rc Cola. The topic of the day was 'In our contemporary mechanised world, is literature losing its significance?' About 12 speakers were judged on the basis of matter, manner and method and prizes were given out for the Best speaker, Best team and Best interjector. Many students have also participated in Hindi Debates and won prizes on various occasions.

- Economics Association – Every year, the Economics Association organizes its annual festival “Bliss Point”. This festival is an inter-college event comprising events like Siddharth Memorial Debate, group discussion, essay writing, quiz etc. Incidentally, this is the first inter-college event to be ever hosted online.
- SV College Social Service Society – The SSS unit of the college organizes blood donation camps from time to time in association with the Rotary Blood Bank. The college students are found to be enthusiastically participating in the camps and donating blood. The SSS also organizes lectures and talks on topics related to health and public welfare.
- Women’s Development Centre – This centre conducts its activities with a team of teachers from various departments. It has been endeavouring to bring gender justice as well as promote gender sensitization among both students and faculty in order to create an awareness towards social and gender inequities in our society. It organizes talks and interactive sessions on child labour, women and violence, sexual harassment etc. It has also conducted a self defence training by Delhi Police Women’s Cell for the girl students.
- Society for Drama and Dramaturgy – The English Dramatics Society has been christened as ‘Verbum’. It celebrates two annual inter college festivals “Word of Dionysia” a conglomeration of scholars and students, mutually engaged in a rich exploration of the theory of drama and “Act of Dionysia” an invitation to various colleges to perform their best plays in a neutral, interactive atmosphere. The Hindi Dramatics Society has staged a number of plays in various colleges of Delhi University.

Apart from these, the other active associations are Commerce Association, Physics Society, Telugu Bhasha Parishad, Biotechnology Association, College Science Improvement Programme (COSIP) , Science Association etc.

A brief profile of SV College indicates that its high standards and quality play no small role in attracting the best of students from diverse backgrounds into its fold. Hence, it is an ideal sample area to study youth culture. While carrying out an ethnographic study of the college for around four months, I visited various components of the institution and had extensive interactive sessions with around 50 students (both boys and girls) in the age group of 18-21 years from various disciplines. These sessions happened in places ranging from the classrooms to college canteen, playground, lawns to the popular student hangouts just outside the college. During the interactions, the students enlightened me about their socio-economic profiles, lifestyles and debated and discussed about various topics of interest like politics, romance, peer relationships, religion and about their views regarding education, modernity, globalization, nationalism etc.

A majority of students with whom I interacted came from middle or upper middle class families. Their parent(s) were either professionals (lawyers, scientists, engineers, corporate officers, doctors, professors, bankers) or were involved in business. They earned enough to be financially secure and cater to all the requirements of their children. The students coming from such families were very proud of their parents' achievements and the fact that 'money was never an issue' for them. They claimed that their parents were liberal and open-minded. For them, the concept of generation gap did not matter much since parents were apparently 'cool' and 'understanding' - they knew that their children were mature enough to handle their lives, be it friends, money or love relations. Especially, students with both parents working pointed out that their parents had little time to be interfering or nagging and that they expected their children to handle their freedom with responsibility. Interestingly, the girls, more than the boys, appeared to be enjoying more freedom and no interference from their families. While the girls said that they enjoyed immense trust of their families and were encouraged to take individual decisions and that only once in a while, the parents intervened in

matters regarding career, overspending, dating, late-nights etc., the boys said that their families were '100% involved in their lives'. Parents kept a close watch on their study routine, friends and spending habits. Generally, the mothers were found to be keenly following their sons' activities. On a question on gender discrimination within families, both boys and girls unanimously declared there was no question of it. Children of both sexes were treated equally and their views 'heard' and 'respected'. Some, however believed, that irrespective of sex, the elder children had to shoulder more responsibility and the younger ones got away with a lot of pampering.

A slightly different response was obtained from students who were from lower-middle class families. Initially, they were extremely reluctant and hesitant to talk about their family background before their peers. Upon a lot of prodding, they mentioned their parents' occupations (school teachers, clerks in central government, office assistants etc.). Students from such families perceived their parents as conservative. They reasoned that since the parents themselves (most of the time) hailed from adjoining small towns like Meerut, Rohtak, Bulandshahr, Nainital etc. and had spent a major part of their formative years there, they had still not come to terms with a metro lifestyle. As a result, the students had a tough time convincing their parents on issues like pocket money, outings etc. Though they owned up that the parents tried their best to be understanding, the students were definitely resentful of the fact that parents were very rigid regarding dress code, friendship with opposite sex etc. Especially, the girls had a grouse that parents were very strict and did not take kindly to their donning western wear, mixing with boys and going out frequently with peers. They kept a strict watch on the academic performance of their wards (this applies to both boys and girls) and constantly nagged them to perform better.

Most of the students came from nuclear families and many had only one sibling. All of them claimed to be very close to their families and the male students

generally said that they were attached to their mothers. Almost all the students agreed that they had few interactions with their extended families and got to meet their cousins, uncles and aunts very rarely. As many pointed out “parents and siblings matter, we don’t care about the rest.” A particular female student confided that though she was attached to her extended family (grandparents, uncles and aunts), she did not like their conservative attitude. She summed up by saying that her generation’s attitude towards the extended family was ‘hear them out, but do as you want’. Many students felt that their upbringing had been independent and individualistic and so they could not tolerate the loads of advice doled out by the elders of the extended family.

Barring a handful, most of the students I spoke to had completed their schooling from Delhi, though the nature of it varied. While some had studied in Kendriya Vidyalayas and vernacular schools, others had been to posh English medium schools and quite a few had even attended residential schools at Dehradun, Gwalior, Ajmer etc. All the students were equivocal in declaring that school life had been all about innocence, mischief and loads of fun. About their choice of SV College amongst others, the students were found to have opted for this college since it was the best in the South Campus, had a ‘good’ course structure, was free of rowdyism and promised a combination of education as well as fun. While the freshers and most of the senior male students gushed about the college saying that the campus life was ‘just great’, vibrant and ‘mast’, the seniors (especially female students) did not seem to think so. The latter had realized after a few months in the college that real college life was very different from that portrayed with such aplomb in the movies. Though their college was well-balanced with a healthy mixture of extra-curricular activities (it was found that some seminar, debate or discussion was being held every other day) and academics, it was boring. A few girls pointed out that vis-à-vis the ‘happening’ colleges of North Campus, theirs was dreary.

It took quite a while to find out that the real reason for the 'boring' and 'dreary' nature of the institution was compulsory attendance. All the students were vehemently opposed to it. A group of freshers from Commerce and Humanities believed that at the age that they were in, they 'knew' their preferences and should not be made to submit to compulsory class attendance (75% attendance was the norm). At least, they felt, college students should not be treated like 'school kids' and should not be made to sit in classes just for the sake of it. The senior students were of the opinion that there should be no compulsory attendance in the final year as they had so many other things to do-prepare for a future career, go for tuitions. What was especially galling to them was that their 'short attendance sheets' were mailed to their parents along with a complaint letter. According to a student of Humanities, there was no point in making such a hue and cry over class lectures since they were so boring and theoretical.

Irrespective of the disciplines that they came from, all the students cribbed about the course structure. According to them, the courses were too outdated and theoretical. They were simply not interested in cramming theories and reading about thinkers who existed "a century or two ago." As one girl put it, the students did not mind reading about a Karl Marx or Rousseau as long as they were taught about contemporary trends and thinkers. Again, the students asserted that it was pointless to study a subject (especially Humanities) in India when they were not taught about the contribution of Indian thinkers at all. As a result, these students did not want to pursue academics after their graduation. They believed that there was no point in pursuing M.A. since they knew that the teachers will repeat the same things and they were not interested in taking down the same kind of notes. Rather, they would prefer to do courses in M.B.A, Law, Dietics etc., which offered good career opportunities.

Despite the complaints, all the students agreed that after a protected life at school, college was a great leveller as well as a learning experience. A group of students

from the Science stream opined that in college (vis-à-vis schools which could be elite oriented) where people from different backgrounds come, it was impossible to make an impression with wealth. What counted in college was a genuinely good nature. (However, many did defer on this point and the male students especially pointed out that looks, bearing and materialistic possessions did matter!) A number of students did own up that the college had played a great role in developing their talents and skills by organizing a number of activities. A student of Economics said that most importantly, college had taught her to deal with the world and bureaucratic hassles was one of them. She elaborated that they had come across such problems while starting off their Economics Environment Society. The staff as well as the officials, they found, were just not open to creative ideas of students. But then, after a number of delays, the administration had come around and now, the Environment Society was the most active association of the college. It was found that the members of this society (all Economics students) regularly cleaned up the campus in turns, ensured that polythene was used minimally, at times, tendered to plants, carried on florification and awareness drives and had held seminars on 'Economy, Environment and Society'. It was heartening to note that the students had taken upon themselves, the mantle to make their surroundings as eco-friendly as possible. Similarly, the students of Sociology had started a wall magazine, "I-witness" in which they penned articles, poems, book reviews etc. Moreover, it could be deduced that students, through their participation in various activities, were dedicating their college lives to constructive purposes.

Another activity which generated a lot of excitement among students and elicited their maximum participation was the college and Delhi University Students Union (DUSU) elections. To the freshers, the elections were indeed, a "great event." They enjoyed the campaigning-the posters, promises, candidates' attentions etc. But the best thing was that the candidates did treat them to coffee and samosas a

few times. Though enjoying their first exposure to electioneering, a handful of them did not turn up to vote because they had been forewarned that it gets 'dirty' on voting day.

The senior students appeared equally enthusiastic about the elections. According to them, though campaigning was quite aggressive, their college, unlike other DU colleges, was free from 'goonda politics'. Election time was chaotic but if one had friends contesting, as some girls put it, it was great fun to campaign. Putting up posters, distributing pamphlets, organizing speeches excited the students. But the icing on the cake was the treats that some candidates/ political parties organized for the students at 5 star hotels/pubs where there was unlimited flow of food, drinks and music. But a few students, especially girls, were found to be quite disenchanted with campus elections. One of them said – "How can I vote for a candidate who does not even look educated and cannot present himself well?"

According to many students, the party hardly mattered during voting since all were nearly the same. The candidates only appeared during elections and vanished after that. So, issue –based voting was not possible. The candidates, in their opinion, had to have good looks, a polished and impressive manner of speaking and at no point should be uncouth (which they said was the case with many DUSU contestants). Others felt that students should make use of their right to vote and the candidates should have good manifestos. A student of Political Science told me that if he were to contest, a compulsory dress code for both boys and girls and banning of mobile phones would be the essentials of his manifesto! The interactions with students revealed that those in the Science Stream did not take a keen interest in campus politics and therefore, when a science student contested for the post of Gen. Secretary in the current year, the curiosity and enthusiasm factor was so high that he eventually had a landslide victory.

On national political scenario, a number of students (all believing Hindus) felt ashamed of the negative publicity India got due to the 'Hindutva' agenda/ 'Ram

mandir' issue. Their major contention was – “Will a Ram mandir give us a job, house, cleanliness?” The general feeling was that the fundamentalist stand was totally superfluous and a ploy to divert attention from the more pressing problems of the country. On many interactive sessions, the question of a person of foreign origin assuming the post of prime ministership in India cropped up and was always debated upon heatedly. While some said that they could accept a foreign born who would have adapted to Indian dress and language, others vehemently retaliated that dress and language alone were not culture and that a foreign born could never understand the essence and ethos of India. A few even went to the extent of saying that in an extreme situation, they could accept a corrupt, uncouth Indian as a leader but never a ‘videshi’. Hestitatingly, most of the students conceded that they would prefer not to have a foreign-born PM because that would show badly in the international fora and moreover, such a PM will not be able to present India’ interests properly. Though they were vitriolic about the politicians for not ushering in balanced development, the students, in general, were very proud of Indian leaders for their impressive showing at the WTO summit at Cancun. They felt that for once, India had asserted itself and made its presence felt internationally.

If politics happened to be the hottest topic of discussion, the hottest hang-out was the college canteen and the adjoining Romeo’s lane. Here, class notes were swapped, treats given, gossip sessions held, fashion statements made, rounds of palmistry and numerology continued, friendships struck and love and romance were definitely in the air. The general consensus was that the canteen was the best place to pass free hours since the students could hardly afford the luxury of a Priya complex or a Ansal Plaza everyday. And, needless to say, the ‘popular’ students of the college ruled the roost here. I asked one of them as to what made him so sought after and he replied that to be popular, the biggest asset would be a great

sense of humour and the ability to laugh at oneself. Besides, clothes and talents like singing, palmistry were also assets.

All the youngsters I talked to agreed that dress and possessing things like an 'exciting' cellphone, car, motorbike etc. played an important role initially in college. One had to be careful about dressing 'right' and being 'different' (though the connotations of both the words could never be elaborated). Moreover, one had to have the right attitude and personality – for the girls, it meant a honest personality and for the boys an easy going, helpful nature. While most of the boys confided that they could not afford branded clothes and had to shop at local stores, the girls believed that they 'had to' spend on branded clothes to maintain a certain standard. All the youngsters I spoke to agreed that 'managing money' had become a big problem. And needless to say, the issue of pocket money led to frequent tiffs with parents. The students from upper-middle class backgrounds got about Rs. 1,000 – 1,200/- per month as pocket money which they spent at the PVRs, up market cafés, branded clothes, cellphone bills etc. One female student apparently had a joint ATM account with her father and withdrew money at will, her monthly expenses amounted to around Rs. 6,000/- and no, her parents did not object much to her spending. The students from less affluent families had about Rs. 300- 500/- as pocket money which they spent on movies (visiting PVRs was a rarity), eating at the college canteen, shopping etc. Some of them gave tuitions and did part-time jobs in order to earn their pocket money. They felt that it was cruel to torment their parents by arguing for money and so they tried to earn to pay for their little luxuries.

As a number of students declared that they had struck up very good friendships in the college, I was interested in knowing how these friendships came about. Nearly all of them said that initially looks and clothes did matter but what helped in forging bonds was, 'pleasing personality' and 'similar mentality'. Generally, boys made friends with those who had similar tastes (e.g. watching movies, playing

musical instruments, swimming etc.) while girls preferred to make friends within the department only. While the youngsters from well to do backgrounds vehemently denied that there was any notion of 'classism' in making friends (though they own up that they would never even talk to a shabbily dressed person), those from humble families said that 'money' and 'status' were major factors in college friendships, though this was not the norm, always. Students, irrespective of their backgrounds, felt that peer group pressure was an over hyped concept. It did not matter much for the majority but the few who got affected by it ended up spending endless amounts of money, smoking, drinking etc. Some girls, however, did concede that peer pressure played an important role in the matter of fashion and make-up.

Both boys and girls seemed to be highly in favour of platonic relationships with the opposite sex. They believed that such friendships played a pivotal role in character building. Chivalry and gallantry were definitely not applauded by either sex. To girls, chivalry appeared to be a cheap gimmick to impress and to boys, it was a thing of the past. Both preferred open, honest relationships and believed that cases like boys treating girls needlessly, giving presents etc. were quite disgusting.

Romance was another matter though. The general refrain among students was that 'dosti tak theek hai... but no serious relationships'. While the girls thought that it was highly 'uncool' to have boyfriends because people thought you were 'booked' and 'stopped giving you attention', the boys believed that since they were uncertain of their own future, they could not make any serious commitments and anyways, there was 'more pain than gain' in an affair. Many even said that they could not afford a girlfriend; one needed to be financially independent to do justice to a relationship. Many students opined that those who had affairs in college were not serious at all, it was just 'time pass' and people went in for a boyfriend/girlfriend to build status. Some girls confided that they would not mind having 'a relationship of convenience' – a partner with good looks, money and a

vehicle. But they said that they did realize that though the sunny side of a romance was that one had someone to hang on to and get pampered, the flip side was that sometimes, girls got 'foolish' enough to become pregnant and then had to elope, get married and make a mess out of their lives.

Generally, it was found that students who were not involved in any relationships though that beyond a point, romance was boring. Partners, they said, demanded a lot of time and encroached upon private space. In short, they were seen to be quite a nuisance! Initially, there was a lot of hesitation among those students who were involved in romantic relationships. The girls, it was found, were more forthright in talking about their relationships – they did not think that they were young to handle affairs. For them, it was not age but maturity that mattered. But they were clear that at the point, they were not as serious about their partners as they were about their careers. Future plans with partners could wait, presently, they wanted to follow their dreams. Their parents supported their cause, but the same was not the case with boys. Generally, the latter were not even willing to admit a relationship, and when some did, they said that they had never discussed about it with their parents for the fear of being severely castigated. They said that the 'affair' had just happened to them and they had absolutely no idea of the future.

All the girls were found to be preferring love marriages. They felt that as educated and mature persons, they should have the right to choose their partners. And, they were not averse to the idea of flouting their parents' wishes if the situation so demanded, for they were sure that parents would 'come around.' On the other hand, the boys preferred 'arranged love marriages'. They were not sure whether they could make a right choice in marriage and thought that such issues were best left to parents. Moreover, the boys said that they could not even dream of going against the wishes of their parents even for the sake of a beloved.

Though all the youngsters wanted a 'good' career – a fat salary, plush apartment and generous allowances, most of them were not sure of their future career plans.

While a few wanted to wait and watch, some wanted to go abroad and others were thinking of joining some professional course. But, they all agreed that they had little interest in pursuing higher studies. What excited the boys and girls alike were courses in MBA, hospitality industry, law, media studies etc. They wanted to pursue courses which would give them a short-cut to interesting, well-paying jobs. Call centres appeared to be interesting career options for many students since they offered easy money. Some also wanted to make a career out of hobbies like drama, dance etc. A particular student said that he was a professional tabla player and wanted to pursue it as a career but there were a number of hurdles. For one, behind the polished exterior of the 'cultural scene', there was rampant corruption and favouritism. A very long period of struggle and anonymity awaited those who had no godfathers. It seemed as if the students were not very willing to 'struggle' or tolerate prolonged gestation periods. Probably, this was one of the reasons why except for a handful who wanted to pursue civil services, most were not interested in government jobs, the main reason being that promotions were few and far between.

One thing that most of the youth were sure about was that in some way or the other, they wanted to assert their youth power. While many coming from upper class backgrounds did admit that they had led such sheltered lives that issues like unemployment, gender discrimination etc. were alien to them, they did want to make a difference to their surroundings. What was the general concern of students was to reinforce 'Indianness'. They wanted to excel in their respective fields and thus, make their country proud. Some students said that they wanted to revive nationalism by making the singing of national anthem compulsory in all educational institutions. Some students said that instead of joining corporate houses, they wanted to start their own business houses to provide employment to others. The youngsters felt that though they were full of innovative ideas, no one gave them enough credence or importance. As one student put it, "even though

elders think that we are frivolous, in 10-15 years, we will prove our mettle to them and to the country.”

This ethnographic account gives us a peek into the youth culture existing in the college.

II. Biographies and Narratives

In order to have a comprehensive insight, we have chosen 15 biographical narratives. These life histories give us a more clear picture of the views, opinions, dreams and aspirations of the youth and the challenges they face in everyday life.

(i) *Sanjeev : Chilling out spiritually!*

Sanjeev is a student of B.A, 2nd year, Sociology (Hons). He resides at Gurgaon. His father is a keralite who has been brought up in Calcutta and mother is a Nepali-Bengali also hailing from Calcutta. His father is an executive in a MNC at Gurgaon and mother is a housewife. Sanjeev has an elder brother who is presently studying Microbiology at Scotland.

He was born at Cuttack (Orissa) and completed his education at Patna, Pune and Delhi. Since his nursery, he has attended missionary schools and has had (as he puts it) a good schooling. Since Sanjeev has moved from one place to another, he has developed a cosmopolitan attitude. He says that his experiences of and at different regions with different cultures has helped him develop an individuality and unlike many others, he does not feel the need to flaunt himself. People with a cosmopolitan background like him, Sanjeev says, do not have preconceived notions about people and places. As for himself, he is very open-minded and does not entertain mindless biases and prejudices.

After completing his higher secondary in Humanities, Sanjeev wanted to do his Hons. either in English or Sociology. He did attend some classes of Eng. (Hons.) but felt that the courses left a lot to be desired. Therefore, he opted for Sociology

and now he really likes the subject since it is an interpretative discipline according to him. Moreover, it is a vast discipline, which gives a student a bird's eye-view of the society. Sanjeev says that at times, it was awkward to be a guy in a class having majority of girls but now, he has adjusted himself. Though he says that he enjoys his classes, he feels that the irrelevant courses 'are a drag'. The courses were generally theoretical and required 'rote learning'. Sanjeev feels that attempts should be made to introduce 'applicative courses'.

He says that during the first year of college, the teachers had a bad impression of their class and thought that they were not 'serious enough'. Though later on, the class improved academically, the teachers remain indifferent and do not take regular classes. Sanjeev says that it would be much better if the teachers could be more friendly, co-operative, regular and 'let by-gones be by-gones'.

Vis-à-vis college, Sanjeev feels that school life is much better as there is a structure to every activity. But then, a college life and college education, in Sanjeev's opinion, are very important. The entire gamut of college life teaches one a lot of things. One sees people, talks to people, influences and gets influenced. And this helps in developing a wide perspective. College life makes one strong emotionally. Sanjeev feels that it is difficult to sustain in college. Since there is a lot of freedom all of a sudden, it is easy to get swayed and so one has to learn to conduct oneself properly. Sanjeev philosophizes "One learns the lessons of life in the college and so college life is important."

College gives a lot of exposure in terms of things and people. Sanjeev has a lot of friends due to his extrovert nature and participation in extra-curricular activities. He is a member of the 'Music association'. He has friends from his music group with whom he practices; he has pals with whom he hangs out; and friends with whom he occasionally smokes. He says that in college, it is tough to make 'best friends'; one does not find perfect company in college and so the best idea is to hang around with a 'likeable' group in the college and then go home and 'be

yourself'. In college, people are generally, in his opinion, not in a mood to 'make friends' they just want to 'chill out'.

As far as romance is concerned at this stage of life, Sanjeev feels that it is pointless since one is not sure of oneself. Moreover, making a public exhibition is in a bad taste. He says that a minority in college was serious about their relationships and as long as one was mature enough to handle it, it was ok. He says that having a boyfriend/girlfriend used to be a status symbol in school but it is not so in college.

As far as his parents are concerned, he says that they are relaxed. His father grew up in Calcutta in 1970s and (he says) has tried out everything from smoking to liquor to drugs. So, he is 'cool'. If his friends drop by, it is his papa who offers them cigars and drinks. Sanjeev says that his mom is a bit protective and at times there are cold wars with her on petty matters.

Sanjeev gets about Rs. 800/- per month as pocket money and thinks that it is enough. He says that some students get loads of pocket money but then, one has to realize that it is not one's own money and then think whether one can afford such a high lifestyle later on. He generally spends on food and outings to Dilli Haat, Pebble Street etc. He explains that one does not have to go to a PVR and spend hundreds to have a good time; life in college is vibrant as well and then for him 'good time' means 'good company'. Personally, Sanjeev likes to go to the India Habitat Centre to attend seminars and interactive sessions.

His hobbies are music and theatre and he loves listening to Indian classical music. At times, he participates in the debates and dumb charades in college. But then, he says that though he is deeply immersed in music, it is not his calling. After college, he wants to pursue Mass Communication at Bombay and he has no plans of following his brother abroad.

Once he is settled, Sanjeev would like to adopt kids since 'he has wanted to do this since a long time'. Though he hasn't thought about marriage, if he does get

married, it would definitely be a love marriage. His parents, of course, would have no hassles since they themselves had a love marriage. Sanjeev is all for a nuclear family. He is very attached to his family but nevertheless, he would like to stay apart from his parents and raise his kids without any kind of interference and in the way he wants to.

Sanjeev says that he is not as religious as he is spiritual. For him, it is important to get peace of mind. He meditates once in a while to feel relaxed. He has a special leaning towards Buddhism as he feels it gives one a lifestyle to follow and not just a body of rules and strictures to abide by.

He feels that today, the youth is perceived as superficial. There is a definitely a 'pseudoness' in the way the youth portrays itself. He says that there are instances in which people go to great lengths in presenting themselves in ways which are different from their real selves. As for himself, he does not look for outer symbols like dress, car etc. While making friends, he does not look at the way one dresses, but the way one is. Of course, it is very important to carry oneself properly but obsession with external symbols is silly.

On globalization, Sanjeev feels that it is not scary at all. He says that globalization is a logical course since a 'unification' has to be there in this era – socially, culturally, economically. We should not be wary of 'winds of change' from abroad. But then, we should not get carried away, as well.

Sanjeev feels that at the college/ university level, elections are a farce. At the national level, parties are coming up with fantastic agendas which do not reflect the wishes and aspirations of the masses. The leaders impress lower- middle class for their own ends which he feels is dangerous as well as pathetic.

(ii) Pratibha : Negotiating with parental hassles.

Pratibha is in 3rd year of B.Sc (general) course. Her subjects are Chemistry, Biology and Zoology. She opted for these subjects because she liked the

combination and she joined Venky. since it has a nice reputation , especially in sciences. The crowd was also good and there was no rowdyism.

Her parents are originally from Agra. Father is a clerk in the central government and mother is a housewife. She has an elder sister who is married and brother is a software engineer. Pratibha is the youngest. She has completed her schooling from Air Force School, Subroto Park. She had done well in school and secured 76% in 12th std. In school, she used to be a Prefect. She misses her school days but enjoys the freedom of college.

In her opinion, college education should be given top priority. School is an enclosed society whereas college provided an entirely new environment and gave an opportunity to see and interact with new kinds of people. College experience as well of education is invaluable in planning a career and future in her opinion. Pratibha feels that the courses in the college were good. The teachers were punctual and regular and the library was also well stocked. She liked the classes and was marked 2nd in her IInd year final exams. She says that she has always been a good student and in fact got through VDS (dental) exam but did not take it up as the institute was not government recognized. Rather, she wished to pursue a M.Sc in Dietics.

Earlier, Pratibha used to get a pocket money of Rs 400/- per month from her parents. But since she found it inadequate, she started giving tuitions to school kids four months ago. Now, she earns Rs. 1,000 per month. She says that her parents have no problems about her giving tuitions as long as it does no hamper her studies. She spends her money at the canteen, shopping at S. N. market, watching movies at Chanakya, Sangam (since they are affordable) etc. She says that some people in the college, especially those in the B.com (pass) course get thousands of pocket money and they also spend a lot. They are the 'hep' crowd and are a class of their own.

She feels that dress is a very important aspect in college life. A girl from her class from Bhiwadi was a big butt of jokes in the 1st year because she used to dress in ill fitting salwar suits. Classmates used to call her names and at times, she was ragged as well. According to Pratibha, students do not have to be flashy but a shabbily dressed person is rejected by the college crowd.

In her opinion, a certain kind of class 'ism' does exist in college. People of a certain economic group mix amongst themselves only. She said that it was logical also since they had similar tastes. Her class, in particular, did not go by such norms and there was no perceptible 'super-rich-middle class- lower class' divide as such. She feels that in some students, a feeling of relative deprivation does arise by seeing others with a rich lifestyle. She as such, has had no such problems since all her friends belong to the same economic group.

She feels that since her parents have been brought up in a small town like Agra, they have yet to accept the culture and lifestyle of Delhi. Probably, this is one of the reason why a generation/ communication gap exists between her and her parents. She is not really close to anyone in her family and feels that her parents are not really interested in her activities. Even when she tries talking about her college life or friends, her parents become bored and do not pay attention. This hurts her a lot and as a result, these days she rarely speaks to them. She thinks that she would feel nice and wanted if her parents took interest in her and were supportive. She narrates an incident in which her mother would be appreciative of her friends wearing sleeveless dresses but when she herself wanted to get one stitched for herself, her mother was very hesitant. This particular incident irked Pratibha a lot.

Partibha's hobbies are playing basketball, listening to music and 'interacting' and 'making friends'. She says that in college, she has realized that interactions and outings with friends are very important. To which place one goes for outings is not. She says that her crowd does not go for many outings but when they do, they

go out to watch movies at Chanakya and Sangam (since they are affordable); she has no interest in English movies. She likes to watch Hindi movies like 'Astitva' which portray human relations and the finer sentiments of life.

Pratibha has a big friend circle. She feels that the relationship is not reciprocal in her friends circle, i.e, probably, she feels she invested more in terms of emotions than others. As far as love and romance is concerned, she feels that first, one should know a person's nature very well before going in for a relationship. At the same time, she feels that boys generally get carried away by girls' appearance rather than spare a thought for nature, personality etc.

She feels that in college, romance and love affairs become very restrictive. She has a friend who is having an affair and who feels 'tied down' because of her boy friend's demands on her time and attention. Pratibha opines that in such cases (which are in majority), the relationships do not last very long. She normally tells her mother of her friends' affairs who is generally cool about it. But Pratibha is apprehensive whether her parents would accept it if she had a love affair. Only when she starts working can she think of any relationship and she could tell her family only if she was serious enough to think of marriage. She knows that her parents would be extremely angry if she just flirted around. She says that as far as having her own family is concerned, a nuclear or joint family would not matter to her as long as it was loving and understanding.

As far as religion is concerned, Pratibha says that her mother is religious and very particular about the rituals. As for herself, she has faith in god but is not very particular about pujas, fasts etc, her. But she feels that her mother would be happy if she was more intent on rituals.

Pratibha feels that voting in DUSU elections is very casual as everyone knows that the candidates will not work for the university but further their own vested interests. She says that she votes for candidates on the basis of colleges they are

from. In the national fora, she feels that politics has become pathetic. She dislikes Congress because of its inclination towards hierarchy and dynastic rule. She says that it was because of Nehru's short sightedness that we have the Kashmir issue and we are reaping the bitter fruits of his faults. By default, she says that she supports BJP but feels that its 'Hindutva' agenda is a bluff to get votes from a certain section. She says that BJP relates more to people while Congress is busy with image worship.

She feels that the older generation is probably not comfortable with the outer symbols of modernity and globalization. But since she has been brought up in Delhi, she has no problems, as such. She feels that elders are very critical of the new waves of change and feel that the young generation has been swept away. Pratibha has a grouse that they do listen to the youth but want to prove them wrong all the while. She says that such a negative attitude was not favourable in modern times.

(iii) *Kushan : Focussed individualism.*

Kushan is a final year student of B.com (Hons). He has a natural aptitude for Commerce which was his subject stream in 12th as well. He opted to study in Venky since it is a good college and the courses are also average.

His father is an Additional Superintendent of Police and mother works in the LIC. He has an elder sister who is studying law. His family is very close knit and he says that it is his 'fallback'. He did his schooling from Air Force Bal Bharati School.

He feels that school life is glorious as when one is young, one is naïve and enjoys life. Moreover, there are no tensions regarding career in school. In comparison, college is much more practical as one gets to see different facets of life at this stage. A person becomes much more pragmatic, as a result. He says that college education is very important because apart from enriching one's mental faculties, it

does wonders for social life as well. A person forges social contacts and interacts which are very important.

However, Kushan feels that most of the college courses are not relevant to practical life. Graduate courses are all about slogging and reading immaterial theories. In all, they do not teach anything. Probably, that was one reason why a graduate degree in India was so looked down upon. In his opinion, for streams like Commerce, summer training is required to give the students some practical, on-work experience.

Kushan is an 'above average student' who wants to appear in his CAT exams the next year. After a MBA degree, he wants to work and then start off some enterprise of his own later on in life.

He gets a pocket money of Rs 500 – 700/- per month which he spends on food and movies. He likes watching comedies and hanging out at Priya complex. His hobbies are music and driving. He has his own bike but at times, he likes taking his father's car for long drives. Though he is not a member of any association, at times, he attends certain fests and functions in college. He feels that at this stage, one should get an opportunity to make his/her choice, which should not be enforced for e.g. by compulsory attendance since it obstructs the development of a 'mature' mind.

On matters of dress, he feels that there should be no dress code for either sex and people should be allowed to wear whatever they like provided it is decent. Branded materials do not matter much to him and he says that majority of the students can't afford them either. In college, dress is not all that important, what matters is a person's good nature.

Kushan has limited number of friends in the college. He feels that there are no quality relationships among students in the college. Romance and love affairs, for him, are irrelevant. People indulge in them as a pastime and sometimes having a

boyfriend/girlfriend is treated as a status symbol. In a romantic relationship, the other expects a lot and it becomes restrictive. He feels that serious relationships do exist during college days but it is definitely a scarcity. On the question of his own marriage in future, he is not decided but he is not averse to having a love marriage. He feels that his parents have no objections to this since they themselves had a love marriage. He would prefer to stay on with his parents after marriage. He says he is not close to his own cousins and he is very close to his parents. So, he would want his parents to stay with him.

Kushan says that he is an atheist but this does not mean that he does not believe in god. He respects all religions and says that 'he can say a prayer anywhere'. But, he does not give a yen for rituals and ceremonies. For him, it is utterly disgusting that people fight and shed blood for the sake for religion. His parents do crib about his 'atheism' but Kushan says that all the time, he either tries to convince them or just skirts the issue.

On the issues of modernity and globalization, Kushan feels that parents are yet to get adjusted to the outer symbols of modernity and western culture, especially among the youth. His parents strongly disapprove of Hollywood movies in which 'there is lot of skin show' and the 'Pizza Hut culture'. They are also averse to indecent clothing, especially among girls. His sister and parents have never had a confrontation on this issue because she herself, is not fond of short clothes. Kushan agrees with his parents on these issues but feels that we should not feel insecure about the advent of globalization (MNCs etc), because our culture is very rich and has been accommodating since ancient times. If we feel that our culture is so weak to get affected by MNCs, then we should let go of it.

He feels that student politics has become the victim of downgraded thinking. The youth politicians have super inflated egos and are totally uncouth in the sense that they lack finesse, personality and vision. Similarly, the situation at the national level is as bleak. The country, he feels, is run by idiots who sponsor communal

riots. The youth, as such, have no opportunity to influence or mould a society of their choice.

As such, he feels that people do not want to mess up their lives for the nation. As for himself, he says that he is not the revolutionary kind to think of bringing about 'socio-political' changes. He feels that if the youth work for themselves towards their small goals, better themselves, they can improve the society.

(iv) Deepak : Perseverance and sincerity maketh a man.

Deepak is a student of B.A. final year Hindi (Hons). He hails from Dehradun. His father is a cashier in a bank and mother, a housewife. His younger brother is doing a B.A (Pass) course and is in his 1st year at Dehradun. He shifted to Delhi with his mother because the capital city has 'good' colleges and offers 'better' opportunities.

He chose Hindi as his subject since he did not score a good percentage in CBSE (12th exams). Moreover, he had obtained maximum marks in Hindi. When he shifted to Delhi, he had absolutely no idea of the colleges. He enquired around and his relatives and acquaintances said that if he wanted to 'study' he should choose Venky College. In college, he was satisfied to a great extent with the atmosphere, courses etc. At the same time, he is also doing a 3 year software engineering course in NIIT and hopes to work in the IT sector in Hindi.

He feels that college life is far better than school. In school, one is highly dependent and studies are always marks- oriented. In college, one gets the freedom to take one's own decisions. Moreover, college helps in developing one's personality for the future.

Deepak opines that the importance / necessity of college education depends upon the nature of the atmosphere of the college. College life has been beneficial to him since he has been deeply involved in studies as well as extra-curricular activities which have given him a lot of exposure. He has participated in debates, extempore

poem competitions, creative writing contests and compered in the college festivals. He feels that all this contribute to the personality. He is also an active member of NSS in the college.

He feels that in college, one does need a group of steady friends to share emotions, to go out etc. In Venky, he does feel that amongst a few, class 'ism' does exist while interacting, making friends etc. About love affairs, he feels that if both involved are serious, then it is fine. Deepak is attracted to a girl at NIIT and says that it is all about 'silent love' and mutual understanding. They like being with each other, but as of now, have not thought of a future together. He would like to opt for a love marriage and feels that if he can convince his parents that he 'understands' someone, they will not oppose. Since he believes that joint families force one to make 'unhealthy' compromises and are generally overcrowded, he wants to have a nuclear family of his own in which he believes that he can handle situations well.

Deepak gives tuitions to school children and earns about Rs 1,000/- pm. So, he does not need to ask his mother for pocket money. He spends generally on mobile phone, clothes and course related and 'computer' books. His hobbies include watching TV (Cartoon Network, Discovery, Sports Channels), reading fiction (which have a positive ending) and travelling. On his father's LTC, he has travelled to Orissa, West Bengal, Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir. In his free time, he likes hanging out in the college canteen or watching movies at Chanakya. Deepak likes sweet romantic Hindi movies like 'Koi Mil Gaya' which have a positive ending.

He feels that in today's age, parents moulded themselves to the new cultural patterns and as a result, generation gap doesn't exist much. He feels that his best friend is his grandma. He says that he has shared feelings and emotions with her which he has never dared to disclose before anyone. She also confides the little secrets of her life in him.

Deepak believes in god but is not superstitious at all. He is not fond of rituals and external displays like wearing 'a tika' to college during exams. He says that religion is a personal matter and should not be made public.

Though parents feel that Indian culture has been changed by globalization, he opines that MNCs have their own benefits. They provide a lot of job opportunities and make investments in the Indian economy which is good.

Deepak feels that youth politics is fine but 'superficial.' He elaborates by saying that he had voted for DUSU candidates on basis of their looks, smartness and the number of posters they had put up. At the national level, he feels that there is no leader of repute and a lot of horse-trading takes place. Personally, he feels that BJP can become a good party if it gives up the 'Hindutva' agenda. He is very impressed with its sound policies on disinvestment, external affairs and in its ability to provide for a stable government.

Youth today, Deepak feels, are not very responsible. But at the same time, they do have the capacity to oppose and change a decadent system.

(v) Mahek : *Class consciousness is important.*

Mahek is a 1st year student of B.A, History (Hons). She is basically a Delhiite but has completed her schooling from Scindia Kanya Vidyalaya, Gwalior- a boarding school. It has been her family tradition to study at the Scindia schools. She did her higher secondary in Science but was not really interested in it. She has always been fascinated by History and wanted to go to Bangalore for college education. Since she did not get through there, she had to come to Delhi to study at Venky's.

Her father is basically from U.P. and is a businessman. Mother is a house and she has two elder brothers. One of them has done a MCA and is settled in USA and the other works as a technological quality analyst at Gurgaon.

She feels that it is impossible to compare school life to college as each has its own charms but college is comparatively disorganized. She believes that a simple graduation is a waste of time. Right after school, one needs to be job-oriented and do some kind of professional course. Personally, she wants to become a physiotherapist.

Mahek feels that it is very important to have friends of similar status and backgrounds because only then can a group relate amongst itself. She says that in the past few months, she has been careful in choosing friends who dress like her, think like her etc. She has had no romantic relationships so far but she feels that a love affair is ok in college. But then, though people think that they are very 'serious', they are too young to be so. She feels strongly in favour of love marriages and believes that one needs to know a person very well before getting married. If she chooses to go in for a love marriage, her parents will not object at all since they had no problems accepting her elder brother's love marriage. She has, for the time being, no particular thoughts about having a joint or nuclear family but she has reservations about whether her husband's parents will accept and adjust to her lifestyle, attitudes etc.

Mahek gets a pocket money of about Rs 2,500/- pm which she spends on food and clothes. She loves all the eating joints at Priya complex and prefers to eat out there. Apart from that, she likes hanging out at the college canteen-eating, observing people etc. Her hobby is dancing and she has undergone training in Bharat Natyam. She loves fusion dance and most of her free time goes in experimenting with dance and music.

As far as generation gap is concerned, she has had no real hassles. Her brothers had gone through the same process and this made things easier for her. They have always bailed her out of 'crises' and she relates more to them than to her parents. She says that occasionally, her mother throws a fit when she 'tries out new things' like getting her lips pierced, but she eventually adjusts to it. She is not particularly

religious and though her mother, at times, insists on certain rituals, Mahek does not care much about them. She opines that all the hype about globalization is baseless. Elaborating, she says that though she wore foreign made branded stuff and liked eating at McDonald's, she was attached to her Indian side, as well. Even though she wore mini skirts, she was as Indian as any other girl dressed in a saree. Mahek had not voted in the college elections and says that she has no particular views on politics, importance of youth etc.

(vi) *Harpreet : Clipped wings.*

Harpreet is pursuing her B.A. in Political Science (Hons.), final year. She hails from a very conservative Sikh joint family. There are 12 members in her family; her father runs the family business, mother is a housewife and she has an elder sister who is already married.

After completing her schooling in Delhi, she wanted to pursue Law or Public Relations later on. So, it was logical that she opt for Pol. Sc. She wanted to study at the North Campus but since she could not qualify there, she came over to Venky.

She is very disgruntled with college life and does not like the college atmosphere. She feels that people are very 'high-headed' and snooty in college and so, she has very few friends in college. She thinks that she just did not get to meet the 'right' people. A class 'ism' definitely exists in college and people sub-consciously assess each other before even striking an acquaintance. She misses school terribly since she had a big group of friends there and together, they loved breaking rules and enjoying themselves.

Even though she feels that her college years have been a 'waste', she thinks that college education is very important since it provides a lot of exposure and 'frames' one's life.

On romance, she says that she has been in a relationship with a college senior for the past 1½ years. She was not really 'hunting' for a boyfriend, love just happened. She is very serious and committed to her relationship and also wants to get married. But, she feels that it is going to be difficult since in her family, girls are not allowed to mix much with boys or have love marriages though they are quite 'open' about guys of the family having love marriage. If they knew of it, her family would stiffly oppose her affair and would not hesitate to assault her boyfriend. She had confided in her mother about her affair but the latter had asked her to forget about it and had closed the chapter. Though she was aware that Harpreet was still carrying on the affair, she chose to turn a blind eye towards it. Harpreet says that her family is her first priority and she does not know whether she can make a choice between her parents and her boyfriend.

She feels that a generation gap definitely exists between her and her family. She felt that they were too rigid and so difficult to convince. They were extremely religion – oriented and wanted her to marry within the Sikh community only. (Her boyfriend is a non – Sikh). She says that though she respects her religion, she does not categorize on its basis and believes that she is universal in spirit.

Harpreet gets a pocket money of Rs 1500 – 2000/- pm which she spends on mobile phones and clothes. But, she says that she is generally very stingy and ends up saving most of the money. She likes 'chatting' on phone and mailing friends. As for hanging out, she says that anything is fine when she is with her boyfriend, but generally she likes chilling out at Ansal Plaza.

She opines that she is strongly against youth politics but since she is a Pol. Sc. student, her conscience makes her come and vote during elections. She finds the ABVP very unconvincing and 'Bihari type' and so she votes for NSUI. According to her, the candidates promise a lot during elections like starting u-specials, but they don't work later on. At the national level, she feels that politics is, simply put, dirty.

She feels that India, presently, is in a mess since Indians are not 'aware' of their own culture, own society. They get swept away by external influences easily. As for the youth, Harpreet feels that they are enthusiastic and ambitious and have the spirit to revitalize their surroundings.

(vii) *Ashish : Enjoy life!*

Ashish is a 2nd year student of B.Sc. Zoology (Hons.). He hails from a Christian family in Siliguri, West Bengal where his father is a Tea consultant and mother is a teacher in a missionary school. His elder brother is pursuing Agricultural Engineering at Allahabad.

After completing his schooling at Siliguri, he came to Delhi. Though he wanted to study at the North Campus, he could not qualify there and so joined Venky. Though the department is excellent, he found college, especially Venky, very boring. He has a flat at North Campus and prefers to hang around there only. He says that he rarely comes to college even though being in Venky is a good status symbol for him.

Ashish feels that even though school life is restrictive, it was exciting as against college which is too casual. But still, he feels that it is better to do a regular college course than a 'decadent' correspondence course.

He has had not much interactions in college and has very few friends. All his pals are from North Campus with whom he loves getting 'stone drunk', hanging out at Kamla Nagar etc. He feels that dress is very important in college and branded stuff and funky accessories do matter. Ashish spends about Rs 5,000/- on branded stuff and says that even when he smokes or drinks, he favours foreign brands.

He feels that in school, one is not class conscious but it develops during college life. He says that people do keep the family background, status etc. in mind while

making friends. He says that this 'class consciousness' is contagious and somehow he had become trapped in it in Delhi.

On romance, Ashish feels that it is not very important, but if one feels that one is in love, it is ok to have an affair but one should not take it very seriously. He has had a steady girlfriend for the past five years and feels that the relationship has made him more responsible. He was quite serious about preparing for his Combined Defence Service exams and getting settled professionally as soon as possible. He says that his parents are aware of his relationship and though he knew that they resented it, they kept quiet and did not wish to meddle. About marriage, he feels that if things do not work out between him and his girlfriend later on, he would opt for an arranged marriage because statistics indicate that love marriages do not last long. He says that if he does not qualify for CDS, he would like to take a job in Calcutta so as to stay with his parents as that would make 'life easier.'

Ashish believes that his parents are not very restrictive and let him lead his own life. His parents do not mind his earrings or ponytail since they believe that they are passing fads. He says that though he respects his religion, he does not practice much and is not a member of any church. He has not told his parents about this for he feels that they would be upset to know that he does not attend Sunday services.

As for college politics, he is not interested in it and has no views on national politics either though he thinks that both are money oriented.

He feels that globalization has definitely made an impact on Indian lifestyle. He feels that people might feel that the westernized Indians were pretentious but their life was much more exciting. He says that he craves for the new kind of posh lifestyle and feels that now, it is the only way to live a good life.

(viii) *Manav : No responsibilities, please!*

Manav is a 2nd year student of B.Com (Pass). His father runs a business and his mother is a social worker at the crime branch. He has an elder brother who works

with HCL and a younger one in Std. X. After finishing his higher secondary in Commerce, he wanted to do a MBA course. So, he opted for Commerce at Venky since the college has a very good reputation.

For him, college life has been great and is a must for every student. He feels that college life offers new experiences and helps one to bloom as an individual. He says that he has made a number of friends in college but they are 'just time-pass.' To come to college, one should be very particular about dress since it depicts the attitude of an individual. He feels that one should always look cool in college.

Of late, Manav says that he has realized that romance is not very important. He has had three girlfriends in the past three years and has broken up with his last girlfriend a few weeks ago. He feels that an affair is good as long as it lasts but it should not be taken seriously. He says that his parents knew about his previous girlfriends and had no objection to them. He feels that love marriages are a better bargain in life since there is a good understanding based upon close interaction between the couple and if he were to opt for one, his parents will not oppose at all.

Manav gets a pocket money of Rs 500 – 600/- per month which he spends on watching action and romantic movies and freaking out at Priya complex, Ansal Plaza etc. He has no particular hobby as such but likes making friends and enjoying life.

Though he is very close to his family and treats his mother as his confidant, he feels that a generation gap does exist. He has rows with his parents since they object to his partying at discos, pubs etc. He feels that parents should understand that this was his age to enjoy life and that going to discos etc. was very much in vogue.

Manav feels that college elections are organized for the benefit of students only and so they must participate in it. He always votes for the NSUI and even campaigns for it since his friends are in the party. He claims that the present

DUSU President is a friend of his for whom he had campaigned a lot. Since his mother is an active Congress member, he supports the party even though he feels that it is 'a little bit corrupt.'

Manav feels that the society should not burden the youth with responsibilities. They should be allowed to enjoy life to the hilt before they think of settling down. He feels that the older generation needlessly forces the youth to become serious in life whereas he feels that one has ample time to think of a career.

(ix) Vandana : Trying to get out of the 'behenji' mould.

Vandana is a 1st year student of B.A., Hindi (Hons.). Her father is an inspector in the BSF and mother is a housewife. She has two younger brothers who are in 2nd and 8th stds. respectively. They originally hail from Punjab but since Vandana's father has a transferable job, they have stayed in different parts of India. She has completed her schooling from Calcutta and is presently staying with her relatives at Delhi for her college education.

In Venky, she had actually opted for English (Hons.) but could not qualify. Hence, she settled for Hindi. Her parents and relatives wanted her to join Venky. College since it was a 'famous' college with a very good reputation. Vandana is, as of now, undecided about the future. She has no plans as such and just wants to enjoy college life for the time being.

She used to like school a lot since she was with her parents then and also because it had regularity to it. In college, she finds that the teachers are much more stricter than those at school. They insist on regular attendance, scold at the slightest pretext, give a lot of home tasks etc. As a result, the students do not get a lot of 'free' time. But still, she feels that attending college is very important since one gets to imbibe so much by just listening to teachers, friends etc.

In the past few months, Vandana has made a large group of friends with whom she shares very close relations. She feels that in Venky, status symbols like mobiles,

cars etc. matter a lot. She has seen others discreetly enquiring about family statuses before making friends. Dress also plays a very important role. One has to be well-dressed in order to be acceptable. She says that shabbily dressed individuals, especially girls, are ragged mercilessly and called 'rude names' behind their backs. She has often heard of some people calling the Hindi deptt. as 'behenji deptt.' since many girls wear salwar suits.

Vandana thinks that college is not the time for romance. Many love affairs, she says, start during the school years also but fizzle out with time. She says that affairs in college are superficial and time pass. Given a choice, she would opt for an arranged marriage for herself because should anything go wrong, she can 'blame' everything on her parents. But if a love marriage does not work out, (which she feels happens generally) she would have to take the responsibility and also face social ostracism. She wants loads of 'freedom' after marriage which she feels is possible only in a nuclear family. Here, she can lead a life without restrictions and moreover, she need not be answerable to anyone.

She feels that some kind of generation gap does exist between her and her parents. Though they did not mind her interactions with boys in school, now, they have become more restrictive and do not want her to have male friends. They are also particular about a decent dress code. Whenever she argues with them regarding clothes of some type (saying that everyone wears them now), they tell her not to ape films. Vandana says that now, they have started accepting 'jeans' as something that is necessary in a girls' wardrobe but sometimes, they still voice their reservations.

She comes from a religious family and says that she has utmost faith in God. She observes fasts on Mondays (her cousin says that this will give her a good husband) and the Navratras. She goes to the temple on Mondays and Saturdays. When she was at home, she liked attending 'kirtans' and 'jagrans' with her mother.

Though she has not received any formal training, Vandana sings very well and has already auditioned to participate in the college fest. Another hobby of hers is to watch romantic, Hindi movies. She gets a pocket money of Rs 400 – 500/- per month which she spends in gifts for friends and in the canteen. In her free time, she either goes to the library for reference work or chats with her friends in the canteen, lawns etc.

About the first experience of college and university elections, she says that the candidates give them a lot of importance before elections but vanish without a trace afterwards. She voted for NSUI in the elections solely on the basis of looks of the candidate. According to her, politicians at the national level just waste government money. She narrates an incident of her locality where a politician dug up a well-made road and had it remade and also wanted to take credit for it. She feels that it is high time the old politicians retired and the younger ones took their place.

She feels that globalization has brought in a western culture in a big way. Nightclubs have mushroomed everywhere and girls do not want to be seen in salwar suits and sarees anymore. She says that though the older generation is averse to it, she personally found it exciting and feels that we must not be rigidly biased about any thing. At the same time, we should not get carried away. The youth have a lot of responsibility and since parents do not think much of them and feel they just exist, the youth should prove their mettle and change such opinions.

(x) *Noor : A fine act of balance.*

Noor is doing a B.A. (Pass) course in Travel and Tourism and is in her 1st year. She has completed her schooling from a missionary institution in Delhi. Her father is a businessman and mother runs a boutique of her own. She has a younger brother who is in the 7th Std.

She took up the Travel and Tourism course because it is an upcoming stream and is very interesting. It offers a lot of job opportunities and might just help her get into the tourism or airlines industry. She is very happy for having joined Venky which has a good atmosphere and perfectly cool environment. Though she herself does not participate in extra-curricular activities, she feels that there are a number of activities, fests etc. to be involved in the college. Additionally, she finds the faculty very good and supportive.

Noor feels that college education is very important because after the drab school years, it gives one a chance to have lots of fun. Moreover, it gives a lot of exposure as one learns so much from one's peer group, teachers, classmates etc.

She feels that a good dress sense is very important in college since it reflects the kind of individual one is and also determines the kind of crowd one gets into. She says that apart from making friends, it is very normal for people to make boyfriends/girlfriends in college. The level of seriousness more or less depends upon the nature of relationship. Noor herself is now 'involved' with a neighbour of hers. She has been into this affair for the past 3½ years. She says that she feels nice to have a 'special someone' with whom she can share her feelings, emotions etc. Her relationship has been smooth sailing till now and she is very serious about it. But, she feels that the right time has not come to talk about it to her parents though she has told all her cousins about it. She says that most probably, she would like to get married to the guy she is in love with because for her, it is very important to love, understand and know a person before marriage. She says that since she has a 'zero tolerance level', she would like to have a nuclear family of her own after marriage.

Noor gets a pocket money of Rs 1500-2000/- pm which she spends on mobile, shopping, food, watching movies at Priya etc. She loves hanging out at the college canteen since she gets to observe a lot of people and also gossip with her friends.

At times, she feels that she over spends which leads to hassles with her parents. But generally, her parent have been very nice and she has never felt the existence of any kind of generation gap. Even in terms of religion, they let her have her own space and do not insist on anything. She says that she goes to the temple once in a while but is not very particular about religion. She feels that politics is doing more harm than good for India's image. Caste politics leads to tensions, riots etc. which spoil India's secular fabric. Noor opines that politics right from the student level to the national level stinks of opportunism and corruption.

She feels that probably, globalization has had the greatest impact on the attitude of the youth. Some people would go to any length to appear 'hep' and be famous. Noor says that she, herself, has tried everything from hard drinks to grass but is not addicted to anything. According to her, one should know where to stop and balance oneself. Otherwise, it is very easy to get swayed by deviating tendencies.

Youth, Noor feels, do not get an opportunity to make a difference in the society. All the limelight is being taken by extremely old people who see no dreams, have no visions. She feels that they should retire and make way for a new generation.

(xi) Kartik : *Belief in atheism.*

Kartik is a final year student of Biochemistry (Hons.). His father is a HR consultant having his own office at Nehru Place and mother is a government employee at Delhi Cantt. He has a younger brother who is studying Science in 12 std.

He completed his schooling from a missionary school of Delhi. He used to fare well in Science and so he wanted to continue with it during graduation as well. He opted for Venky, since he feels that it is the best college of South campus with a superb Science faculty. He wants to go abroad and pursue his studies after his B.Sc.

Kartik says that so far, he has enjoyed his college days despite the hectic schedule. He feels that since they have to stay on the entire day in the college, at least the science students should get Saturdays off. According to him, students in school pine for college and once in college, they start missing school. As for him, he has had the best of both school and college but felt that a college life is very important after school since it helps one to get into the big world.

He has made many 'close friends' in college who are as important as 'food' to him. He feels that in college, one needs to have a like-minded group in order to feel comfortable. However, he does realize that some students especially those with upper middle class backgrounds only wanted to socialize with people having the 'same status'. Kartik thinks that such 'an elitist mentality' at a young age can have an adverse impact on the personality. He says that he has no particular views on love/romance in college and feels that if a student is mature enough, then there is no harm in such a relationship. Personally, he wants to concentrate on his career and does not want any 'serious involvement.' In future, he would prefer to have a love marriage because for him, it is important to get to know the person with whom he would have to spend his entire life. He is confident that his parents will accept his decision provided he has a settled career. For him, joint family/nuclear family concept is not important; living together is not important, the hearts should be together.

Kartik likes to chat on net, play cricket, volleyball and basketball. In fact, for him, the most attractive point of Venky. is its excellent cricket pitch. In college, he participates in Hindi dramatics. He gets a pocket money of Rs 1,000/- pm which he spends on his mobile and eating out. Generally, with a very busy college schedule, he does not get much leisure time but when he does, he likes going to Priya complex to eat out and watch the latest 'masala' flicks.

Kartik is very close to his younger brother and says that they are best friends. His cousins also live in the city and whenever he gets time, he visits them. He feels

that a very subtle generation gap exists between his and his parents' generation. His parents have adjusted quite a lot to changing trends but they do have certain reservations. For example, they do mind when girls wearing skimpy clothes drop in to meet Kartik or his brother. They are also critical of Kartik's atheist views. He says that he believes in God but does not 'feel like' worshipping lifeless murtis. He is of the opinion that there is a universal power in which he has faith. But, he has been unable to convince the same to his parents.

In college elections, Kartik votes on the basis of manifestos. He has seen the college representatives fulfilling their promises. They have put up sheds in the canteen, set up a separate sanitation staff to clean toilets etc. But, at the national level, he does not support any party for he feels that the politicians are worthless and do not keep promises.

He feels that globalization has ushered in a westernized culture which has had a slightly negative influence in matters of dress. Otherwise, he feels that the new trends are positive and depends on how we adjust and survive. Indian culture, he believes, cannot be eroded by the incorporation of western symbols. Anyways, in an era of 'survival of fittest', only those trends and tenets would survive which are most compatible to people's lifestyles.

Kartik feels that the youth of today is mature but probably, it does not get reflected very often in their attitudes. He says that it is upon the youth to show their maturity in a proper manner so that the society realizes and respects their seriousness.

(xii) Pooja : 'Environmentally' conscious.

Pooja is in her 2nd year of B.Sc. (Hons), Statistics. Her father is an Executive in a company and mother is a housewife. She has no siblings.

She completed her schooling from DPS, RK Puram with very high marks in her Senior Secondary. Though she was very interested in the field of medicine, she could not qualify. She joined Venky since it is nearest to her home and also has a 'good' reputation. Since she has always liked Statistics, she opted for it in her graduation. After B.Sc., she wishes to continue her further studies in US.

Pooja enjoyed her school life very much. But once in college, she feels that school is like an 'island' while college is a mini world. It helps a student to observe, learn, think and reflect. After school, one needed to come to college in order to mature mentally. According to her, one must be very careful while making friends in college because generally, it is teeming with snobs and selfish people. She has made 1-2 close friends and has a number of acquaintances. While she feels that she tries to be kind and good to people, they probably think her to be gullible and try to 'use' her – they borrow her notes and don't return them, drag her name into gossip etc.

She feels that a love affair just adds to the confusion in college. However, she has been in a 'long-distance relationship' since two years. Her boy friend had been her best friend in school and when he proposed, she had been totally confused. Though she had accepted, she is still not sure whether she really loves him. Pooja feels thankful that immediately afterwards, he left for the US for further study and that she does not have to 'maintain' a relationship all the time. According to her, romance is very important. Though, at the moment, she was not very enthusiastic about an affair, she would not mind having a love marriage in future but that should be with parental consent.

Apart from studies, Pooja is an active member of 'Environment Association'. Due to the efforts of the Association, there are proper dustbins in the college and very little littering. Pooja, as the Gen. Secretary of the Association, gave it a lot of her free time. Creative writing was another hobby of hers. She got around Rs. 2000/-

pm as pocket money which she generally spent on food, clothes etc. Generally, she and her friends liked hanging around at the food joints of Greater Kailash.

As far as she can remember, she has never had any hassles with her parents. They have always been very understanding and have stood by her all the time. In fact, since she does not have any sibling, Pooja has always been very close to her mother. She says both like doing things together like shopping, going to temples etc. Though she does not think that she is very religious, she does 'pujas' and keeps 'fasts' since 'she has always done them'.

Pooja has never been very enthusiastic about college elections. She feels that the parties are all hoaxes who want to exploit students. She says that while BJP always 'harps' on Indian culture, it does not hesitate to throw disco parties for students at 5 star hotels during election campaigning. At the state level, Pooja likes the Congress because of the developmental work of Delhi Government and its honesty and transparency. She isn't very sure of her views on national level politics but feels that the 'foreigner issue' campaign directed is in bad taste.

About globalization, she feels that in a way, it is good since it provides a lot of employment opportunities to the Indians. However, she dislikes the blind aping of any thing that is foreign. Pooja is of the opinion that we must respect our own culture first. Then only, we can appreciate other cultures in a 'proper manner'.

(xiii) ***Fahim : Smiling through worries.***

Fahim is a final year student of Hindi (Hons.). He finished his schooling from a Hindi medium school. He belongs to a large family of seven members. His father owns autos which he rents out and also manages a garage. His mother is a housewife. Fahim is the eldest among four children (two sons, two daughters). His grandmother also lives with them.

He had enjoyed his school days since it was situated in the neighbourhood and was attended by all his friends and playmates. After school, he had opted for Hindi

since he had always got good marks in it. He had never dreamt of studying in a reputed college like Venky and so the admission had come as a big surprise. Now, as a student, his chest swelled with pride when he met his old friends studying at lesser known colleges.

In college earlier, he had been warned by his father to be careful of the friends he made. For eg. his father had asked him not to eat or drink from scheduled castes. But in college, Fahim had disregarded all these strictures. He feels that in college, one becomes mature. He was a very shy guy earlier but has opened up in college and has made many friends. According to him, the way a person dresses is very important as it shows his class. He gets a pocket money of Rs. 2500/- pm which he spends on buying clothes and giving gifts to friends. One has to be very selective about clothes and so, extra care should be taken to buy the right kind of stuff.

Fahim likes playing cricket and watching Amitabh Bachchan's and Farooque Sheikh's movies. He is also a member of Hindi Parishad and NSS in the college. After classes, he likes to sit and chat with his 'friends in the college lawns. One aspect of college which he disliked was the college canteen. He says that the sophisticated crowd over there gave him an inferiority complex and made him feel as though he did not 'belong' there. He said that he always avoided going anywhere near the canteen.

In college, he feels that time should not be wasted in romance. He had a girlfriend in school but they drifted apart after some time. He would opt for an arranged marriage, since among Muslims, love marriages were generally not successful. In his opinion, love marriage leads to friction in the family and moreover, the attitudes of lovers towards each other changes once they get married.

He says that there is a very wide generation gap between him and his parents. Parents were very restrictive and did not care much about his wishes. They felt that education had turned his head and he wanted to break away from the family

though Fahim insists that he always wants to live with his parents only. They were forcing him to pay more attention to the family business since his father has had a massive heart attack but he was more concerned about his studies. Also, though he kept the rozas, his father rued the fact that Fahim was not a devout Muslim.

He complains that his parents think in an orthodox manner. They were determined to get him married to a Muslim girl of their choice immediately after he finished his B.A. Fahim had wanted to get married to a tall, fair girl and had hoped that his parents would consider his wishes. But he was shocked to find that his engagement had been finalised with a short, dark girl who was doing a correspondence course. Now, he would have to get married to the girl against his wishes since dowry and a lot of valuable gifts had already been given to her by Fahim's parents. If the marriage was to be called off, apart from the loss of social prestige, the dowry would also not be returned.

On politics, Fahim says that there should be dictatorship in India to prevent corruption and to channelise the resources. He says that he hated the pandits and mullahs alike for they made inflammatory speeches and thus instigated communal riots. He feels that the Muslims in India are in an unenviable position. The Pakistanis hate them for not leaving India and the Indians are suspicious of them. The Muslims are tired of proving their loyalty.

Fahim feels that India is now ruled by old people. The youth are not paid any attention at all. In his opinion, in order to move ahead, the voice of youth should be given due respect.

(xiv) Ritika : *Being young is beautiful.*

Ritika is a 1st year student of B.Com (Hons.). She hails originally from Rohtak and is presently staying at a ladies hostel in South Delhi. Her father is a businessman and mother a housewife. Her younger brother is studying in a boarding school at Chandigarh.

She completed her schooling from Chandigarh and came over to Delhi for her college education. Since Delhi does have a lot of good colleges, it was difficult to make a choice but she opted for Venky since it was much more accessible from the hostel she stayed in. After finishing her graduation, she wants to join her father's business.

For Ritika, studying in Delhi was a very 'new' experience. She thought that the college was really 'cool' and staying in a hostel and handling number of responsibilities demanded a lot of maturity from her. She was learning to deal with the world everyday. She feels that at least once in student life, a person should be left to manage on his/her own because then, a person gains a lot of valuable experience.

A few months into college, she has made a couple of friends. But, there has been no interaction with boys as yet though they somehow had got her mobile phone number and kept on giving her missed calls. As such, they have little interactions even with seniors since their time in college was mostly taken up by classes. They make friends out of the classmates and she says that she is lucky to have made 'good friends'. Before coming to Delhi, she had been warned of the hep crowd. But here, especially in Venky, she found that students were not all that class or position conscious. They were generally 'cool' since as such, one makes friends in college just to hang out.

On romance, Ritika prefers to 'wait and watch' since she is new to the entire set-up: she would not mind having a boyfriend just for fun and to help her out in the city. She feels that college was not a place to waste time having a 'serious' affair. As for herself, she'd hate to be tied down to particular person so early in life. Later on, she would like to opt for a love marriage but only with parental consent. She is deeply superstitious and says that a marriage with the curse of parents is bound to be doomed. Ritika is very religious and close to her parents and fasts on every

Wednesday for their well-being. She says that she is very close to her family and has always found them very co-operative and understanding.

She likes to play the piano and draw cartoons in her free time. In Delhi, she likes hanging out at Priya with her friends. She likes the complex since it is bustling with people all the time. Since Ritika is away from home, she uses her father's ATM card and draws any amount of money she wants. In the past few months, she has no record of the money she has spent but is sure it must be quite a lot since she is prone to overspending.

Ritika feels that the recently concluded DUSU elections were 'very flashy'. The candidates were all good looking but could not speak properly. She did not find them very impressive and voted for those whose names she remembered. Though she feels that the current political scenario is not very encouraging, Ritika believes that the future of India lies in the hands of young, dynamic leaders. She cannot make up her mind about favouring any party for she thinks that they all are of the same type.

Ritika believes that despite being thought of as superficial, the youth of today have a lot of maturity and foresight. They should be given a chance by the older generation to prove themselves. She feels that all talk of the present generation being westernized is rubbish since even now, people want to have Indian food regularly and not pizzas and pastas.

(xv) Sameer : Coping with culture shock.

Sameer is a 2nd year student of Political Science (Hons.). He hails from Meerut and is staying in a hostel in Delhi at present, to complete his college education. His father has a dairy business and mother is a housewife. His younger sister is studying in Std. VI at Meerut.

After completing his schooling from a Hindi medium School, he wanted to come to Delhi for he felt that college education here would give him a lot of exposure.

Since he wants to enter the IAS, he chose Pol. Sc. as his subject. Sameer experienced a very big cultural shock at Delhi. The chaos and aggressiveness of the city coupled with the callousness of the youngsters shocked him a lot. Though now he has adjusted quite well, but he says that he is still uncomfortable with the culture of the city.

He has made a few friends in the college. But, he feels surprised at the general attitude of the students. They have scant respect for the teachers and even talk on mobile in the midst of a class lecture. He says that both boys and girls dress up as if they were coming to a disco. According to him, there should be a dress code for all in the college. He believes that because of the frivolity of a few, people thought that college was a place to have fun. Rather, college was a repository of knowledge and it should be treated similarly.

Sameer feels that lecturers are very mechanical. They limit themselves to classroom teaching and neither have the time nor inclination to look into students' welfare. On the other hand, the quality of teaching is very high and the library also has a good stock of books.

On friendship, Sameer opines that he finds girls to be 'more status oriented' than guys. Girls generally make friends with good students, good lookers or the rich. They are more materialistic whereas guys generally, do not care about these things (or symbols). He feels that students are on a lookout for romance in college. But as far as he was concerned, he did not want to burden himself with a relationship before he got a respectable job. Sameer has never thought of marriage and would gladly leave the issue to be decided by his parents.

He says that he is very close to his mother and sister. He says that he is religious and is proud of his religion. Even in Delhi, he makes it a point to go to the temple on Mondays. Since the family is very close, he has hardly had conflicts or hassles

with his parents on any issue. Disagreements did occur here and there but they were over minor matters.

Sameer gets Rs 6,000/- from his family for overall expenses. He does manage to save some amount every month to buy gifts for his sister. Since he has to cook his own meals, he does not get much free time. At times, he goes to Chanakya to watch a movie or to Delhi Haat. His favourite hobby is to play the mouth organ and he says that he plays it for half an hour daily.

He believes that at present, the Students Union leaders are all 'puppets'. They had no concrete ideology. Sameer says that when he had asked a DUSU candidate to make the practice of singing the national anthem compulsory in colleges, the latter had been stunned. He feels that the current fashion among classes and masses was to shun everything that is Indian. So much so that now the Indians wanted a foreign born PM! Sameer says that he is not against foreign influences. He believes that we must respect them and incorporate the positive ideals. But, at the same time we must not downgrade our rich culture.

III. Seeing Through Life-Histories : Emerging Sociology of Youth Culture

A study of the ethnographic account as well as the case histories provides a lot of insight about the contemporary youth culture in a metropolis.

(i) Attitude towards education – As illustrated in the sociology of urban middle class, the youth of today are markedly different from their predecessors. The study conducted at SV College shows that the youth, bombarded with new-age information and exposed to a multitude of experiences, are a focussed, mature lot. For them, college is not just a gradual progression from school. There is an analytical thinking before opting for disciplines and choosing courses. For this generation, the very meaning of education has undergone a change. They do not want 'knowledge' for the sake of it; education has to have a purpose for them; that is, it should be career oriented. A discipline or a course is not evaluated in terms of

its contribution to the development of faculties but by its capacity to open up attractive avenues of employment. And, college does not simply mean attending lectures. Most of the students make it a point to join various associations in the college in order to develop talents which may again help them in the job market. As Wright Mills¹ had correctly pointed out, we live in an age in which the 'personality market' thrives. Consequently, the youth attempt to equip themselves with as many skills as possible in order to make an impression in this market. So, it is little wonder that they stress so much on 'personality development' during the college years.

(ii) Orientation towards college life – To the students who hailed from middle class or humble families, had come from smaller towns and cities or had not had the privilege of public school education, college was a very enriching experience. They actively participated in college activities, made friends and tried to be among the better students of the class. On the other hand, the students who came from affluent backgrounds, were educated in 'elite' public schools or for whom SV College was not their first choice, college life was very 'boring'. Generally, it was found that these students were not very enthusiastic about college activities, bunked classes and complained about not 'getting along' with classmates, teachers etc. It may be reasoned that the former category respond in the given manner, because, for them, college offers a world much beyond their expectations. The environs are definitely better and offer more possibilities than those seen or experienced before. Moreover, their feelings of relative deprivation (which might have existed due to family incomes, existence in smaller towns or backward neighbourhoods etc.) get considerably assuaged when they rub shoulders with their more well-off counterparts in the college. All this gives them a very positive orientation and in order to be 'taken into the fold' or get 'group acceptance', they struggle harder than others to perform well in various spheres of activities. It

¹ See Haralambos, M. and Heald, R. (1980), *Sociology – Themes and Perspectives*, Oxford : Oxford University Press, p. 234.

appears as if these students are participating in a latent process of sanskritization; they are trying to be a part of the 'much envied crowd' or get the appreciation of the teachers through their performance.

In contrast, it may be explained that the latter category responded in the given manner because in college, they are filled with a sense of *déjà vu* : of having 'been there and done that'. Their life in Delhi or in very good public schools has been quite exciting; the impersonal atmosphere of college pales in comparison. Moreover, if they have been admitted into the college not out of choice but by compulsion, the students are 'negatively oriented': they do not want to attend classes, make friends or engage in co-curricular activities. For them, college life has been a big 'waste' and they try to lay the blame on teachers (who are apparently indifferent), classmates (who are snooty and opportunistic) and the administration (which is seen as anti – students). For them, the compensation can only come by landing in lucrative jobs or by going abroad.

(iii) Importance to consumerism – In the post-liberalization, globalization era, life is equated with having. Not to have means lagging behind. In other words, the ethos of consumerism has spread far, wide and deep. In the consumer society, as pointed out by Baudrillard², it is no longer a question of 'asserting oneself' or 'of proving oneself', but of relating to and gaining the approval of others, soliciting their judgement and their positive affinity. This desire to 'solicit' and 'get solicited' also abounds among the youth. They desire a personality which is pleasing to 'others', want to dress in a way that gets the approval of 'others' etc. Consequently, this generates uniform lifestyles and expectations among the youth and simultaneously, makes them perpetually anxious and insecure. The students were found to be dressing in the same or similar kinds of clothes, shopping at the same places and eating out at the same kind of joints (depending upon their financial position). At the same time, they were insecure of getting out of sync,

² Baudrillard, J. (1998), *The Consumer Society*, London : Sage Publications, Pg. 171.

girls especially, were very apprehensive of being labelled as the 'behenji brigade'. This neurotic restlessness for new things, new fashions and new images draws them into a vortex in which there is consumption for survival and survival for consumption. Of course, this requires some 'pains'. Students who are not able to convince their parents about their 'growing needs' and even otherwise, take up odd jobs or give tuitions. The extra money is devoted to having more and more of everything. Not having something is not seen as the denial of that particular object but as the denial of a lifestyle.

(iv) Emerging utilitarianism – In this world of images, the youth look for 'status symbols', glamour and instant achievement. For example, even in a field like politics, they are not bothered about dreary ideologies or rhetorical speeches. According to them, the best politicians are those who dress well, look good and deliver on their promises. Similarly, friendships are struck with those who belong to the same or similar social strata and are acceptable to 'others', as well. As the youth themselves point out, for them, everything is utilitarian. The attitude is 'if you have it, you flaunt it'. If you join a 'good' college, it is a status symbol, so is a college friend who is popular and so also is the latest model of cellphone. This objectivation demands instant gratification and a craving for more. The students' rationale is that in this highly competitive world, they need to be aggressive and fast-paced, which is not possible by being reticent or subdued.

(v) Evolving cosmopolitan identities – Needless to say, the youth are dazzled by the changes brought about by liberalization, privatization and globalization. They believe that they are the 'denim generation' who have grown up with a 'Pépe Jeans' on the shelf and 'Pizza Hut' around the corner. Unlike their parents, they are not apprehensive of the effects of the globalizing process. According to them, it is because of the MNCs that they have such a lot of job opportunities and moreover, have been exposed to the larger world. Their indigenous culture is sacrosanct and globalizing effects cannot erode it. (No one becomes a lesser

Indian by eating a burger or by working for a MNC). They think that their idea of a 'global village' is a fusion of the best of Indian and western cultures. It is found that the metropolitan youth, due to their wider exposure, have outgrown regional, sectarian biases and are much more cosmopolitan. Though they respect their roots, they are eager for new ideas and experiences coming from different parts of the world. For them, as Beteille³ puts it, it is more important to be part of a smart set, to belong to a global culture than to have been born into the highest caste. Sectarian status becomes ambiguous in pursuit of higher goals.

It would not be an exaggeration to state that this cosmopolitan atmosphere is characterized by organic solidarity. For most of the metropolitan youth, individuality matters much more than collectivity. Wider kinship values acquire secondary or tertiary importance. While the nuclear family is still seen as pivotal or important, the youth have little or no contact with the extended family. Moreover, with both parents working, many feel that they are closer to their friends than to parents or siblings. It was also found that the youth (of middle and upper middle class backgrounds) were not forced to obey the dictates of the family. Decisions were generally consensual and the youngsters admitted that willingly or unwillingly, parents tried to adjust themselves to a changing social scenario. They preferred discussions to authoritative impositions and made attempts to bridge the generation gap. And wherever the parents adopt an inflexible attitude, they lose out because the children are determined to set up their own structures of living, discreetly if needed.

(vi) Modern ideas on love/romance – The youth are obsessed with the idea of being modern and this is reflected in their ideas on love, romance and family. It was found that most of the youth (especially girls) were very open to love and romance. They believed that one could engage in romance without making serious commitments or jeopardizing careers. They realize that social acceptability of love

³ Beteille, A. (1969), *Castes: Old and New - Essays in Social Structure and Social Stratification*, New York: Asia Publishing House, p. 212.

and romance is still far from complete but they do not seem to mind much. Love is seen as a virtue as long as it does not encroach into other spheres: of friends, hobbies, studies etc. And it is treated as untouchable the moment it demands responsibilities, and commitments. Generally 'romance' is viewed from the angle of movies; it is all about chocolates and roses, picnics and parties. In all, the youth's idea of romance is that they do not mind it as long as it is 'fun' and does not weigh them down.

(vii) Preference to love marriage – About marriage, the youth seem to prefer a 'love marriage' or arranged love marriage'. Arranged marriage is shunned and is seen as a 'risky venture'. The general feeling is that in a fast moving world, the additional burden of understandings, compromises and sacrifices entailed by arranged marriage is just not preferable. With life offering large-scale tensions, as such, the youth want peace and tranquility on the home front which they feel that only love marriage can assure. Youth believe that with their education and maturity levels, they are more suited to choose a partner according to their tastes than their parents. For them, the considerations of caste and religion do not matter much. They probably feel that they would feel more comfortable with partners with similar social and educational backgrounds than with partners from the same caste. Of course, marriage, even in modern times, is seen as a family affair. The consent of parents is imperative and therefore, the inclination for 'arranged love marriages'. The cognitive modernity that the young people show does often get moderated by the fact that they are a part of social networks that are of great importance to them. Fear of being scorned by parents, fear of being left alone without emotional or material support in case of need, feelings of obligations towards parents could be important reasons for trying to incorporate parental wishes in getting married to a person of one's choice.

(viii) Changing ideas about family – As Ross⁴ has pointed out, the educated young girls prefer nuclear families to joint families. They feel that joint families should be avoided for its unpleasantness. In other words, the metropolitan youth (girls as well as many boys) who have themselves been brought up in nuclear families find the joint families cumbersome. The tolerance levels, mutual understanding and conformity to elders that joint families require are not viewed favourably by the youth. Girls especially, do not want to adjust to the attitudes and outlooks of their parents-in-law. So, they desire for ‘western style’ nuclear families where they can enjoy freedom, take their own decisions etc. Probably, girls feel that a joint family would shackle their liberated spirit while a nuclear family would be their passport to freedom from their own parents as well as in-laws. But this is not a general sentiment. It is not as if the youth have unanimously embraced what Talcott Parsons⁵ called, an ‘isolated nuclear family’. Many youngsters still prefer joint families for their love, warmth and support. Though many youngsters do realize that joint families lead to wrangles and tensions, they feel that obligation towards ageing parents is of paramount consideration.

(ix) Reinventing religion – Contrary to popular opinion, religion has not lost its force over the youth. Rather, it has reinvented itself. The young people have neither the time nor the patience to abide by traditional rituals of purity and pollution. Moreover, they rarely have elders in the household to enforce these practices. Therefore, religion does not mean rites and rituals to the youth; it signifies a belief. Religion is equated to spiritualism by the youth and the latter has an upper hand over the former. Though some still perform ‘poojas’, go to temples etc., the majority feel the need to meditate, practice yoga etc. But finally, what they all want is ‘inner peace’ and ‘mental tranquility’. Religion, according to them, should provide a way of living and should give peace of mind. The

⁴ Ross, A.D. (1961), *The Hindu Family in its Urban Setting*, Toronto : Oxford University Press, Pg. 208-231.

⁵ See Ahuja, R. (1993), *Indian Social System*, Jaipur : Rawat Publications, Pg. 72.

cosmopolitan youth do not seem to care about religious fanaticism. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian youth concur that bloodshed for the sake of religion is worse than no religion at all. What the youth of today abide by is what may be termed as 'new age religion' which rises above placating deities to a belief in a single, universal power.

It is not possible to draw real conclusions regarding the nature of youth culture or to determine the extent to which its various tenets may be regarded as 'general'. However, it is notable that the socialization and living conditions of the youth in recent years have become rather different from those in earlier decades. Young people of today have grown up with a much larger exposure to information than earlier generations. Some of this information touches upon their cultural sensibilities and reorients them. As a result, we find that they hold views and indulge in practices that are an eclectic mix of the traditional and the modern.

Chapter – 3

CULTURE IN A SITE OF CONSUMPTION

After studying the contents of youth culture in an educational institution, we would now look at another major site of enquiry. This is a market complex, and, as sociologists, we know that the market in a globalized consumerist culture has almost become a great spectacle in which the aspirations, styles, symbols and signs and consumption oriented practices are articulated. That is why a careful study of the market would enable us to see the younger generation more closely- the way it sees itself as consumers and copes up with ever expanding needs, consumption patterns and other symbolic goods. With this objective in mind, in this chapter, we have studied three things. First, with a sociological eye, we have observed the market, its spectacular appearance, glamour and everyday rhythm. Second, through a series of interactive and dialogic conversations, we have carefully studied the multiplicity of meanings attached to the market and associated issues relating to culture and society. Third, we have interpreted the entire qualitative and ethnographic data and tried to make sense of the new trends in the metropolitan/middle class youth culture.

I. Market as a Spectacle

The Priya market complex has been chosen as the site of study. This market, named after the PVR cineplex of the same name, is an attempt to create a shopping mall of an international feel. It is located in South-West Delhi, a stone's throw away from Jawaharlal Nehru University and easily accessible from the middle and upper middle class colonies of Vasant Vihar, Vasant Kunj and R.K. Puram. Surprisingly, it is located near a big debris mound and slum and is also a favorite haunt of the slum children to beg money.

The complex has about 53 upmarket outlets. Food outlets, lifestyle shops, ATMs dominate the complex, the majority being the food outlets. McDonald's, Punjabi by Nature, Subway, O'Brien, Yo! China, Barista, Pizza Hut, Nirula's, Thank God it is Friday – all the 'happening' food joints have outlets here. Apart from these, there are two Mughlai food outlets, two Chinese/Thai joints, two resto-bars, the hi-profile 'Senso' restaurant etc. along with the roadside joints. If anything dominates the Priya scape, it is food! Old restaurants, new ones and hoardings of 'going to be opened shortly' restaurants are here, there and everywhere. One also finds stores of United Colors of Benetton, Levi's, Reebok, Archie's, Lee, Lakmé etc. dotting the complex and if one falls short of money while eating or shopping, the ATM counters of many banks like ICICI, Standard Chartered etc. are at hand.

And this is not surprising since this complex happens to be a favorite haunt of people of all ages and statuses. If in the early afternoons one finds college and university goers roaming around, school children flock in during the late afternoons along with young and middle aged executives for a quick lunch or promenade. The evenings see young people in small groups, couples holding hands and late nights are for family outings-grandparents playing with toddlers near Nirula's fountain and young couples with their in-laws and parents. Whatever the age/category may be, one finds that all the visitors to Priya are 'casually' decked up. School children in school uniform arrive with shirts hanging loose (in case of boys) and lipstick and mascara on the face (in case of girls). A preliminary observation indicates that the complex is actually of, for and by the elite. But, it is not so. People, especially the youth, do take pains to dress up in an 'up-market' manner and flaunt a hip 'western' attitude. Because, for the high school/college goer, Priya is a place where one gets noticed. You notice what others are wearing and how they are carrying themselves and vice-versa. As a group of young boys put it, Priya is such a colourful place, it is the ideal spot for "bird watching."

And why not, when there are birds of so many hues and colours. For example, at 'Barista', one finds alternately, an intellectual as well as a peppy lot. There are many loners lounging at corner tables with cigarettes and books or just staring into open space. Also, one finds groups of guitar strumming, mouth organ wielding youth belting out soulful English numbers over cups of cappuccino and plates of cakes. They are relaxed, they look relaxed with not a bother of the world. As a young, smartly dressed girl put it, sitting at Barista with a cigarette and soaking in the atmosphere is much better than watching Tv all alone at home or attending lectures of "horse faced" teachers in the college.

Up the lane, one comes across McDonald's which has, generally, a under 30 clientele. Generally, kids of 7-14 years throng the place and appear to be very enthusiastic about the burgers. It is found that many parents frequently treat their kids to a lunch of soft drink, French fries, burgers and ice-cream. Of course, the kids also have an eye on free and surprise gifts. As one parent says, "if my son loves to eat here, what is so wrong about it? As for the fats and calories, his school work takes care of it. Moreover, if he wants to build up a collection of complimentary gifts given here, I can indulge him a little bit." In this joint, one finds that the young executives also drop in for a quick lunch or to just enjoy the atmosphere. Some customers said that they enjoyed coming to Mc Donald's since one could just let loose-shout at the top of the voice, crack jokes etc. without being reprimanded by others. Some school kids felt that apart from having fast-food, Mc Donald's was the ideal place to make a fashion statement and 'chill out' with friends. Moreover, the young customers did love the place because the joint appeared to be generally frequented by the people of their age group only; older adults were a rarity. Even if they did come, they preferred the takeaway counter.

Apart from these, there are the 'family' joints like Sheng Villa, Bamboo Garden, Nirula's, Pizza Hut and Punjabi by Nature which have a subdued atmosphere in contrast to the boisterousness of other places. Then, there are outlets like

O'Brien's, Oberoi's Charcuterie, TGIF and Subway's focussing on the upwardly mobile or foreigners. And for those who do not want to dent their wallets and yet have a good time, there are the wayside mobile Chinese/Mughlai/Kabab joints. With so many eating outlets combined with 2 cake shops, a question arises – How frequently are these places frequented and by whom?

The in-charge of most outlets say that their menus and prices are focussed on young professionals, executives and families living/working in the Vasant Vihar, Vasant Kunj area. Students are not a priority except at McDonald's or Amoretto's. But they do admit that students, mostly the teenagers, do come and at times, there are hordes of them. A manager of a food chain admits that the youth of today have lots of pocket money and if they frequent a particular place, it is not chiefly because they like the food but because they need to be 'seen' there along with their pals.

After chatting up with a few youngsters at the complex, I found that most of them felt that the eating joints were too exorbitantly priced. They could not afford going to these places and said that they would need to save for months to have a sparse meal at say, TGIF. Their favourites were McD's and Nirula's because they had a 'chilled out' atmosphere unlike others which were 'snobbish'. But all the youngsters agreed on one point – Priya complex offers much more and far interesting than just food. There are music shops, book stores, international clothes and lifestyle outlets, internet cafés, beauty salons, gift shops, an Ac bazaar etc. The complex appears to be a sound place for business what with new designer stores on the verge of opening.

The music store at Priya appears to be a 'hot spot' for customers. Here, English music albums rub shoulders with their Hindi counterparts and one finds classics as well as new releases in both the sections. Along with these, a number of VCDs/DVDs are also on sale. It was found that most of the young customers enthusiastically checked out the English pop music albums and the Indian remixes.

A young girl said that the remixes were better than the original versions since they had modern, lively beats. A certain section of customers, especially the young professionals were quite interested in Indian and Western classical music. According to them, classical music had a beauty of its own and gave a lot of peace of mind. The section that was most neglected was that of the new Hindi film music albums. The proprietor of the store said that in recent times, no one bothered to buy music cassettes/CDs of new Hindi films because they got to hear the songs for free on the various FM channels. Moreover, the Hindi songs copied the tunes of English music most of the time and so, people preferred to buy the original versions. What appeared to be a rage among the customers and kept the sales counter busy was fusion music.

The Om book store at Priya is a bookworm's delight. It has a wide array of books on History, Science, Psychology, Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology etc. A sizeable section is devoted to books on miscellaneous and current issues. The coffee table books and autobiographies/biographies of famous personalities are prominently displayed. Works of fiction, classics and thrillers also occupy a large section. What is most commendable about this store is that there is a large collection of books for children. It is well stocked with colourful picture books, cartoon strips, well-illustrated storybooks etc. What is surprising about this store is that though it is located in a complex frequented by the youth, the latter seem not to visit it. Middle aged people and research students are generally found to be leafing through various books and even when the young people stray in, they look at the illustrations in coffee table books. The salesman of the store opined that since most of the books were quite highly priced, the sales figures were low. Only the older adults seemed to be buying books either for themselves or as gifts for their children.

It was surprising to find that most people I spoke to did not see Priya complex as a shopping arcade. They bought knick-knacks, had snacks and watched movies but

did not shop. According to them, Priya's was more like a beautifully decorated window; it just did not have the shopping ambience. Moreover, all the shops were elitist and over-priced; they had nothing for the ordinary customer. I realized that for most people, especially the youth, Priya's was good for window-shopping and store-hopping.

The owner of a book store told me that many times, college goers came in, checked out the books and prices and then went out to buy the pirated versions at reduced prices from roadside stalls. A salesgirl of a cosmetics outlet complained that the youngsters generally trooped in to try out the sample lotions and perfumes, fiddled with expensive jars and left without buying anything.

As for the movie hall, it screens the bollywood masala stuff, new 'niche' kind of movies and Hollywood stuff. And, there is a select group for all kinds of movies. Even nameless Hollywood movies get a very good initial. As some students pointed out, the very fact that they were going to watch English films gave them a big 'kick'. It was also found that the movie-going crowd now prefers offbeat films because of their fresh, innovative approach towards a plethora of issues. Most of the girls/ ladies pointed out that they like watching those movies since they give importance to the female point of view. But of course, the A grade Hindi movies take the cake. Unlike the other two classes of movies which are preferred by a select few, the regular Bollywood stuff is the source of rich profits. According to a number of movie goers at Priya's, watching a 'typical' Hindi film is a perfect treat after a hard day's work at school, college or office. It does not bother about holocaust or 'serious social issues'; it is plain entertainment – sweet, peppy and candy-floss.

Despite the glitz and glamour of the complex, the mark of 'India' is definitely there. There are umpteen number of beggars, mostly children, who pester people for money and then, promptly make a beeline for McDonald's. The cows, dogs and cats roaming around, the piles of cow dung, the stench of refuse give the

otherwise uppity Priya complex a paler look. The pathology of the place is that next to well decorated, profusely perfumed international food chains are mounds of litter and rubbing shoulders with sophisticated visitors are numerous naked and half-naked urchins. Of course, there is plenty to eat and drink at Priya's but these slum dwellers go without a sparse meal for days. Moreover, the infrastructure of the complex is also badly maintained. The fountains do not work, some corners are ill-lit, there are very few dustbins, pathways are not cleaned and construction work's waste is littered at many places. It appears as if the stores are only bothered about the upkeep of individual outlets and not a thought goes towards the maintenance of the complex, as a whole.

II. Culture in a Market Place.

The following encounters are an attempt to illustrate the various facets of this ethnographic site.

(i) *Celebrating 'special' occasions.*

Sheng Villa is a Chinese restaurant at Priya's. It was opened 3 ½ years ago, has a 60+ sitting capacity and 24 employees. The manager of the restaurant informed that the Delhi crowd, as such, loved Chinese food and in winters flocked to have soups and noodles. He said that they have a very budgeted menu to attract students from IIT/JNU/DU South Campus and the middle class families. They have also kept the décor subdued so as not to awe the customers. The students, he said, generally come in groups for celebrations and mostly for lunches. The families come for dinner. Generally, the customers comprise of 60% families and 40% students and young professionals. He admitted that business boomed a lot whenever a very good/popular movie was screened at Priya's. Before or after the movie, the restaurant filled up. He said that an additional attraction of the place was 'happy hours' facility in which they served hard drinks at reduced prices.

Very much in vogue with the Chinese tradition, people prefer wine and beer with Chinese food and so they preferred Sheng's since it offered the best of both.

The manager said that they have a typical faithful clientele. As far as the youth were concerned, they like the homely atmosphere, the quick and efficient service and the modestly priced menu. At the same time, he pointed out that though a student cannot afford to eat out at Sheng's twice a month, it is the best for a 'special' occasion.

(ii) *Shopping for 'ready to eat' food.*

I met a newly married couple in their 20s. The husband is a Media Sales Manager with Adidas and the wife teaches classical dancing. They have shifted from Bhopal to Delhi two months before. In the past month, they have come to Priya at least once a week. They like walking around the place and spend a leisurely time. Here, they like shopping at Modern Bazaar because it has a good collection of ready to eat food. The couple said that since none of them prefer traditional cooking, this stuff suited their plate and palate.

But, they did not prefer to eat at Priya's. None of the outlets looked attractive enough. The same stood for shopping though the wife said that she had done some impulse purchasing like buying a trinket here or cosmetic there. For serious shopping, she would prefer to go elsewhere, as there would be more variety. The couple had watched two movies at the hall and liked the crowd very much. The husband said that even though there were many youngsters at Priya's, everyone was decent. At the same time, he felt that the complex would be more attractive if only it had more places to sit, had cleanliness, no beggars and the 'nuisance' roadside joints were moved away since they were big eyesores.

(iii) *Overpriced, pretentious market.*

I met 2 friends, a Bengali boy 'G' and a half - Nigerian, half Indian girl 'M'. Both of them work at a call centre and had been in Delhi for the past six months. They

come to Priya only on weekends to unwind since it was closest to where they stay (Vasant Kunj). M said that Priya is definitely not a place for the youth. All the eateries and outlets are over-priced and did not suit a student's budget. Definitely, a student could not buy UCB gear or Lee shoes casually. Even, the popcorn in the movie hall is atrociously priced and is very customer-unfriendly. 'G' said that vis-à-vis Delhi, his hometown Calcutta is a better place since students could freak out, eat and enjoy for a paltry sum. But Delhi was elitist, one needed a minimum Rs. 200/- to 'hang out' at Priya and only a few could afford that.

'M' said that unlike her home-town Hyderabad, Delhi is pretentious. A glance at the Priya crowd which was otherwise nice and decent was enough to make one realize that the youth dressed to show off. They flaunt their mobile phones and keep them on speakers to attract attention. She also pointed out that despite all their sophistication, people generally have no civic sense; they litter around and use corners as public toilets.

Both G and M say that the crowd at Priya is always the same – irritatingly pretentious and so they have stopped noticing. A major harassment were beggars who were pestering and at times, also threatening.

They felt that Priya could do better with affordable eateries and cleanliness and people could probably enjoy themselves more if they ceased being overtly concerned about sophistication and elitism.

(iv) *Popularising healthy, fast food.*

I talked to an employee 'S' of the American food chain, Subway. He told me that the chain has 14 outlets in the NCR region and the one at Priya's has been opened three months back. The outlet provides fast food, that is, ready to eat/make yourself sandwiches and concentrates on home/office deliveries. Though Priya did have similar outlets, Subway scored over them since it provides healthy fresh food as against the deep fried stuff of McD's. He said that the outlet concentrates on the

foreigners living in and around the diplomatic enclaves of Vasant Kunj. The students and Indians as such, were not targeted since the Indian palate was still to get used to the idea of cold sandwiches. But he admitted that some very rich youngsters did come to the outlet. They generally did not bother about what they were eating but just had anything that sounded exotic and was expensive.

'S' himself is in his early 20s. He has finished his 12th std. and says that he is through with studies now. A resident of Lajpat Nagar, he works part-time at Subway and says that he is paid on an hourly basis which amounts to a good salary. Most importantly, he was enjoying the job and was looking for a future in the catering industry.

(v) Culture of the youth is infectious.

Next, I talked to a married couple, Mrs. and Mr. X who are in their early 40s. They are Punjabis by origin but had been born and brought up in Delhi. They, along with their two children, reside at Safdarjung Enclave. Mr. X is a car dealer and Mrs. X, a housewife. The couple said that they come often to Priya's to have a 'good time'. Mrs. X said that all her friends and neighbours shopped at the Modern Bazaar and so, she too went there. Her kids like having the 'imported cookies, jams and chocolates'. Admitting that it was a bit expensive, she said that 'in order to use imported things and thus develop a good taste and status, one, of course, has to pay'.

Mr. X. said that he loved the crowd at Priya's, especially on weekends, when young people came well-dressed to have a good time. Of course, one could not come to this place dressed like middle-aged oldies. Earlier, he used to feel a bit embarrassed when his wife came in sarees and salwar suits. After a point of time, he bought her jeans and strappy blouses to wear to Priya's. He said that in Priya's, Indian clothes looked outdated. One had to dress as nattily as the teenagers. (He himself was sporting an Adidas T shirt which was too tight for his portly gear).

I asked Mrs. X whether she was comfortable with her dress and she said that earlier, she used to feel extremely flustered as all the strappy stuff did not go with her figure but now she felt ok since she had noticed women plumper than her wearing more revealing stuff. She agreed with her husband that one did need to make a style statement at Priya's.

Mrs. and Mr. X. had had a traditional arranged marriage twelve years ago. They said that they feel envious of today's youth who have the courage and liberty to flirt or have affairs. In their days, even married couples could not hold hands in public. Mr. X. feels that times have changed for the better. Indians have finally come to terms with overt expression of feelings and were slowly shedding their pseudo-prudishness.

The couple like eating at Pizza Hut, Arabian Nites and Mr. X. prefers TGIF for drinks. When they come with their children, they go to McDonald's. Mrs. X said that the kids love the joint and generally prefer visiting it with their friends. .With parents, they feel restrained. Both Mrs. and Mr. X feel that the youth of today have become more bold, confident, articulate and focussed. For example, their pre-teen daughter was extremely self-reliant and had a world of her own. She insisted on 'independence and private space' – wanted to go shopping, watching movies or for outings all on her own. Mr. X said that the only thing lacking in the youth was sensitivity towards others. He said that at times, he feels bad to find extremely well-dressed youngsters abusing the urchins and beggars in the filthiest of languages or when they show no civic sense and etiquette.

(vi) *Hoping for a mini-America.*

I talked to C who is in the Merchant Navy and had come to Priya with his cousins. C originally hails from Dehradun and visits East Delhi quite often to meet his relatives. All the time that he comes to Delhi, he visits Priya since it was 'happening', was centrally located and was much better than the other places.

According to him, Priya complex was more of a hangout area than a shopping place; people generally bought impulsively. C had shopped at Adidas and United Colors of Benetton earlier because of their 'brand popularity'.

For C, the major attractions at Priya are the eating joints. He felt that 80% of the crowd did have something or the other at one or another place. His personal favourites are Pizza Hut and ice creams at Nirula's. Probably, Pizza Hut was a bit expensive but still C said that the pizzas served there are worth all the money!

He felt that the crowd was quite 'good'. Upon prodding, he said that the people at Priya's looked sophisticated, elegant and there was not a hint of the 'crude, Jat culture' which was so prominent everywhere else in Delhi. C opined that only if the place could be more clean and beggars could be driven off, Priya could resemble a mini – America and would be such a welcome relief from the 'third worldliness' of Delhi. As of now, he could not ask for anything more in Priya's.

(vii) Making the best out of pocket money.

I talked to 'F', a student of DPS, R.K. Puram (Std,8). Her father is an Engineer and mother is a High school teacher. Her elder sister studies in the same school and is in Std. XI.

F comes to Priya complex once or twice a month along with her friends after school. To come to the complex, she goes home, changes her school uniform, applies a hint of make-up and then with her mother's permission, comes over. Upon being asked about make-up, F said that a little bit of it made her feel nice and her mother did not object much since vis-à-vis herself, her friends generally 'painted' themselves. She comes to Priya with her friends only during daytime and at times, with her parents, in evenings. Generally, they do not prefer the place much but come along because of her insistence. Outings to Priya with her sister was 'simply not done' since she liked coming with her own peers.

F said that she enjoys coming here since it is good, happening and one gets to notice so many people. Moreover, people are not interfering and she generally has a gala time with her friends. She, surprisingly, said that the crowd is majorly 'faltu'. Girls and guys pretend to be hep and stylish though their attitude is generally 'cheap'; they thought that by wearing revealing clothes and kissing each other, they would 'become foreigners'. To F, the entire idea appeared atrocious.

F spends about Rs 100/- in each visit to Priya. Generally, she spent on McDonald's burgers and on show pieces at Archie's. Her other favourite eateries are Nirula's and Pizza Hut. I asked her whether she would like to have burgers and pizzas daily and F replied that once in a while, they were ok but she likes home food best, specially her mummy's 'aloo paranthas and 'chaat'. Unlike many others and especially, her older sister, F said that she was not addicted to fast food.

On an average, 'F' spends Rs 1,000/- a month generally on clothes and show pieces from Archie's. She likes to wear clothes only from UCB and since they were pricey, she needed 'good amount' of money. Till now, her parents had never objected about pocket money and are generally 'cool'.

F said that her childhood ambition has been to soar in the air high above all and so, she wants to be a pilot, an attractive and well-paid one at that!

(viii) *Stunned by the glamour of the market.*

I met 2 guys, P and Q who are from Bikaner and Jodhpur respectively and have finished their engineering courses. Presently, they are residing at Bersarai and taking coaching to appear for Indian Engg. Services exam. They have been in Delhi for four months and it was their first visit to Priya's. They had heard a lot about the complex from their friends for quite a while and had come over to watch a movie. At first glance, they both had been stunned as the place and its people appeared so 'glitzy'. Though the young crowd appeared nice and good, they

somehow felt as if people were flaunting themselves. After sitting for over an hour watching the crowd, P and Q felt bored by all the 'show-off' and 'glamour'.

P and Q said that their home-towns did not have such hangout places and probably, the concept of 'hangout' is limited to metros only. Small towns are still, they said, not so westernized. P said that the reality was that despite putting up a show, the Indians did not have developed and mature mentalities. We are, in what he said, a transition zone. Though people were still parochial and narrow minded and the youth were still extremely conscious of caste/religious identities, they put up a façade of being modern and westernized.

Q said that the young girls who come to Priya should always remember that sobriety is more important and valuable than gaudy make-up, flashy clothes and a highly affected attitude.

P felt that food at Priya's is a bit expensive but was of quite a good quality. Though it has very good stores, P and Q's complaint was that the place was very dirty and though the crowd desperately wanted to appear western, they apparently had not inculcated the western civic sense: they never used dustbins!

(ix) Parents, please do not preach.

I spent some time with 3 girls from Vasant Vihar who are pursuing Aeronautical Engg. They (A,D and H) had gathered to celebrate the birthday of H at McD's, Priya.

The trio come very often to the Priya complex. D said that Priya's was a much more happening and interesting place when they were at school. Since their school was very close to the complex, they used to come at every available opportunity with their friends. But now, they felt that Priya had lost much of its sheen. H said that the evenings and nights in Priya are the best since, all kinds of interesting, stylish and glamorous people dropped by at that time.

The girls feel that the best about Priya's is the eating joints. They like Nirula's, McD's, Pizza Hut and the momo stalls. But their hot favourite since school days has been McD's and D says that she (almost) has an emotional bonding with the one at Priya. They generally spend Rs 100/- during each outing here and if they didn't want to eat, they shopped at Archie's.

A, D and H get about Rs. 400 – 500/- per month as pocket money and generally, there is lots of acrimony in the house regarding it. H said that her mother hit the roof when she asked for Rs 1,000/- to throw her birthday party and she feels that such a 'scrooge kind' of attitude is highly unreasonable. A confides that it is very irritating to answer hundreds of queries whenever they asked for money from parents. The girls wonder aloud as to when their parents will learn to chill out.

D and H say that the generation gap is for ever. Parents simply do not want to understand simple things. D said that she felt like throwing her mobile into a garbage can for her parents keep on calling her every ½ hr to find her whereabouts. She said that she was fed up of the snoopy attitude of her parents. A said that they all give silly excuses to parents the moment 'interrogation sessions' begin. Elders have a big yen for giving advice which is so boring. She said "The fundamental right of parents is to say and our fundamental duty is to listen. That is it. After that, we want to lead our own lives."

The girls said that they are not interested in politics at all. They felt that political dynamics made no difference to their lives and so they had not cared to vote in Assembly elections.

For A, D and H, the main mantra of life is to eat, drink and make merry and definitely pay no heed to anyone who preaches about 'responsibilities'.

(x) Future – telling with panache.

I talked to an astrologer 'T' who sits near 'Lifespring' store in Priya. He originally hails from Darbhanga in Bihar. He was a factory worker at Calcutta to start with,

but unfortunately the factory closed down and T became unemployed. Thereafter, he went to Benaras where by chance, he happened to learn astrology. He came to Delhi in search of work but finding none, he settled down to future – telling at Priya three years ago.

Upon being asked how he finds the place, T said that he had no opinions and liked any place where he could earn enough.

Speaking a smattering of English, T informed that he is presently putting up at Bersarai. In the daytime, he does 'business' at Priya's and in the evenings, he gives tuitions in Hindi to school children. Generally, he earns a reasonable sum and sends some money back home to his family. Upon being asked as to why he did not try his talents in Bihar, he replied that Biharis have lost all faith in 'pure' and 'ancient' forms of knowledge – astrology, palmistry, face – reading etc.

According to T, people in Delhi are educated and so they have faith in his talents. Upon being asked as to how a 'westernized' crowd in Priya acknowledges his talents, T said that the soul of the youth is Indian but they have been caught in the web of western culture. Anyway, the youth flirt around till the age of 35, but after that, settle down in an 'Indian' way.

T says that 90% of the clientele consists of youth and they generally ask questions on career and love affairs. He felt that many youngsters come to him for the sake of fun and time-pass and once T realizes this, he also dispenses them off in a light-hearted manner. But with people who are actually serious, he foretells their future carefully and also advises them about ways of avoiding imminent danger. Generally, he has no fixed fee and the payment depends upon the client's wish. But if the fee gets paltry, he asks them for more after judging their status.

When asked whether in these complex times, astrology could help the youth, T said that certain 'misguided intellectuals' were busy degrading astrology. According to him, it is a scientific discipline and could help out the youth of today

who get waylaid by drinking, smoking, promiscuity etc. I asked T as to how different astrologers made different predictions if the discipline was scientific. T said that all astrologers have a different way of saying the same things.

Of his three years experience in Priya, T says that his business has been quite good and the fact that he speaks (broken) English has helped. Generally, the youngsters think that he is highly qualified and so they listen to his predictions carefully and pay him more.

(xi) *Having fun with food and drinks.*

I met a group of 4 students (L, M, Z, I) who are students of Management . All the 4 guys are Delhiites and they drop in at Priya once in a while to have fun. Though the crowd, they admitted, is good in the complex, the surroundings are very unclean. Beggars and cowdung are major eye sores.

The guys said that they like eating at Priya's and they especially frequent Nescafe. For special occasions, they go to TGIF. They also like the movie hall and try to watch a movie every alternate Saturday. Upon being asked whether they take care to 'dress up' to hang out, they said that they definitely pay attention to sporting a 'comfortable and casual look'.

On an average, the guys get about Rs. 2500 – 4000/- as pocket money but as L and M said, at times, they have to give an account of their expenditure to parents. I said that the problem arose when they spent money on drinks at the pubs and had to invent stories to please parents. As such, parents are not much of a problem; Z said that the youngsters are much smarter and can con them easily. As regards the generation gap, they felt that, as such, it did not exist and anyways parents had to and mostly did change with time.

L, M and Z had voted in the Assembly elections and the issues they looked for while voting were public maintenance, women's security etc. They feel that the politicians do not try hard enough to fulfill the demands of the masses. However,

they were all praises for the present Delhi government's efficiency. I said that he couldn't vote since he was busy with his part-time job at the furthest corner of the city.

The guys said that they do have mobile phones but are not interested in showing them off. They keep mobiles at their parents' insistence so that they can be 'in touch' with the family.

All the guys feel that censorship on Tv would be welcome since exposure, especially on music videos, had reached a limit. M said that even the foreigners dress better in the Tv shows/ movies. L said that it appeared as if there was a race for exposure and so, family viewing became quite embarrassing.

Globalization, according to them, definitely does not lead to westernization. They believe that by eating out at western joints or by wearing imported stuff, people do not become western. At least, they are all Indians at heart.

(xii) *Romance in a 'chill-out' zone.*

I met a couple E and T sitting near Nirula's. Both are Delhiites and are working with an Airlines company. In their mid 20s, E and T drop in at Priya every weekend to 'just have a great time'.

According to them, Priya's is a fabulous place since it has very good restaurants like Punjabi by Nature and McDonald's. Also, it is a 'cool' shopping place and E said that she often shops at Music World, UCB and Lifespring. She spends about Rs 3,000/- per fortnight shopping at Priya's.

T said that he looks forward to coming to the complex every Saturday since this is the only time he gets to spend with his girlfriend, E. Priya has a very decent crowd and the people generally bother about their own business. E opined that the place is a respite from prying eyes and interfering minds. Here, they could have a heart to heart talk in peace, hold hands and stroll together, cuddle up once in a while

without a thought for the world. She said that places like Dilli Haat, Priya's etc. are just ideal for a great time.

Upon being asked as to whether sporting a particular kind of look was necessary in such 'hep' places, both E and T said that as far as Priya's is concerned, it is a chill out zone and so people should dress accordingly. J said that for example, ladies in heavy sarees and jewellery look obnoxious at Priya's.

Both E and J said that they had voted in the recently concluded elections. What they looked for while voting was the commitment of the party towards the civilians. E said that though most politicians had vested interests and were involved in some scam or the other, she still voted out of a sense of duty.

On the advent of MNCs and foreign goods into the Indian market, they said that it was indeed a good sign since Indians were finally being exposed to quality goods at a quality price. The MNCs provide competitive jobs and so were a boon to the sagging economic structure of India.

(xiii) Experiencing the 'feel of the youth'.

I met a 53 year old gentleman 'V' who manages a 'big' property business and lives just adjacent to the Priya complex. He is basically a Delhiite and had worked in Mumbai and Bangalore for some years before finally starting his business here.

He comes everyday to Priya either in the afternoons or evenings and said that he is on familiar terms with every shop owner in the complex. Generally, he takes a stroll with his colleagues, has coffee at Barista or just 'notices' the crowd. V is very partial to the eating joints 'Punjabi by Nature' and 'Arbian Nites'.

V felt that Priya's is quite an expensive place but he felt that money hardly matters to the crowd who comes here. He said that generally, well – off people come here to have a good time. Most of them are youngsters and he felt that the young people do manage to have a comfortable sum of money – either they do part-time jobs or get indulged in by parents.

V said that he really likes the colourful crowd at Priya's. His only grouse is against the girls who wear very revealing clothes in an attempt to look hyper –western. He explains that he is not against western attire – it has become a part of Indian lifestyle but then, there should be a limit to everything. V, at times, felt very embarrassed at the dress of some ladies and that is his chief reason for avoiding to come to Priya with his children. At places like Priya's, it is better that parents and children do not venture out together.

V feels that in Priya's, he likes the 'feel of the youth', their vibrance and enthusiasm. But at many times, he felt as if he was just out of the picture in such places. On the youth of today, V feels that they are very energetic, confident and aggressive. On the other hand, they are impatient, cannot handle tension and only want quick money. The days of hard work and labour are gone; now the youngsters want everything packed into one single moment. They have become slaves of gizmos like computers and mobile phones and their memory is short and fickle.

About romance among youth, V says that in the days of yore, boys did not even talk to girls but now, the youth are exposed to so many things and ideas at an early age, they mingle with the opposite sex very easily. But, he felt that for them, romance is just time – pass. In Priya's itself, he had observed girls and guys changing partners every week. Romance did not exist for the youth for their affairs were frivolous flings.

V has 2 teenage daughters who constantly tell him not to interfere in their lives since he belonged to the 'old times' and couldn't understand them or their lifestyles. They generally are very secretive as to how they spend their pocket money, who their friends are etc. He says that though he wanted to know more about his daughters' lives, they just would not tell him anything. The only saving grace was that both are good at studies and have no bad habits, as such.

V thinks of himself as quite a liberal father. He feels that times have changed and the older generation needs to adjust itself accordingly. He says that he is quite open to the idea of his daughters opting for love marriage. He would not throw any tantrums and accept their choice gracefully. He feels that with changing times, one could not take a tough stand with the opinionated and smart kids of today.

(xiv) *Develop the 'swadeshi', restrict the 'videshi'.*

I met 3 guys K, R, N who are in their early 20s and live at RK Puram. K is working as part-time accountant and the others are part-time insurance advisers. The three of them are neighbours as well as friends and they come to Priya's on Sundays for a bite at McDonald's or the wayside joints. They felt that the complex suits every taste and pocket. Personally, R says that they spend around Rs 200/- each in each outing and this is generally on food though once in a while, they watch 'good Hindi movies' at the hall. N says that the crowd is a bit flashy at Priya's but he likes it since he thinks that everyone looks so relaxed and 'mast'.

All three said that they had voted for BJP in the Assembly elections since it was the only party with a sound ideology. When reminded of BJP's communal agenda, they brought up the topic of Gujarat riots and R said that he couldn't understand all the hue and cry about it since it was for the first time that the Hindus had attacked the Muslims whereas the Muslims had been inflicting atrocities on Hindus since the 15th century. Here, K said that some vested interests were maligning the RSS while the Sangh wanted only to consolidate the Hindus and build a strong nation.

N said that it was not as if they hated Muslims and wanted them to be driven away from India. He had many Muslim friends but felt that though 'the Muslims suck India's blood, they always have a soft corner for Pakistan'. K and R said that even in India, Muslim culture is very different from that of Hindus. They do not like Muslim culture since they feel that Muslims are dirty and uncouth. K says 'Look

at the filth at Chandni Chowk and in other parts of old Delhi. That is what the Muslim way of living is all about'.

On marriage, the 3 of them feel that inter-caste marriage is acceptable but not inter-religious marriage. K says that at the extreme, a Hindu boy may marry a Muslim girl and get her converted but marriage of Hindu girls into Muslim families is taboo. R says that there is no possibility that he would ever love and feel like marrying into a Muslim or Christian family.

R and N say that in the national political scenario, Sonia Gandhi should not be allowed to become the Prime Minister since she was an outsider. No country put foreigners in high posts. Here, K brings up the case of Fiji where a PIO PM was overthrown by a coup. He says that keeping such cases in mind, how could one accept Mrs. Gandhi who took Indian citizenship after staying in the country for 15 years. N said that just as we can never make a very beloved guest a family member, so also we cannot accept Sonia Gandhi. R said that she should go back to Italy to fulfill her political ambitions.

On the issue of censorship in Tv, N said that there are channels like Zee MGM which show pornographic movies and these should be stopped since they are against Indian values.

K, R and N said that globalization has definitely brought about westernization in India. They opine that MNCs should be allowed into India in a limited manner; they are fine as long as they provide good employment opportunities but restrictions should be there on 'faltu imports'. Rather than giving lots of amenities to foreign companies, the government should concentrate on developing the 'swadeshi' industries and companies because they can only bring about the development of the country.

III. New Trends In Youth Culture

The new trends in youth culture that have emerged from this study are :-

(i) Profusion and youth – The landscape of Priya complex, with its big stores, with their abundance of canned foods and clothing, of foodstuffs and ready-made garments present, as Baudrillard¹ would put it, the geometrical locus of abundance. There is something more in this piling high than the quantity of products – the manifest presence of surplus, the magical, definitive negation of scarcity, the luxurious sense of being already in the land of plenty. In this site of consumption, one finds that the individual is invited, primarily, to enjoy himself, to indulge himself. The understanding is that it is by pleasing oneself that one is likely to please others. The themes of spending, enjoyment and non-calculation ('by now, pay later' through credit card system) have taken over from the 'puritan' themes of saving, work and heritage. It may be said that the individual serves the industrial system of today not by supplying it with savings and the resulting capital; he serves it by consuming its products. As Galbraith² writes, 'on no other matter, religious, political, or moral, is he so elaborately and skillfully and expensively instructed'. So, we find that where the individual, as such, is required and is practically irreplaceable today is as a consumer.

(ii) Consumerism as the dominant culture – And, the most desirable and easy to attract consumers are the youth. Faced with a confused sense of identity or even identity crisis, modern consumer culture is seen by the youngsters as a source of identity. A more refined style of living and new avenues of spending have been introduced to them during the process of liberalization and globalization. The modern means of mass communication have made consumerism the dominant culture. The magazines, advertisements, Tv, all target the youth, the most impressionable category, and exhort them to try everything and fill them with the

¹ Baudrillard, J. (1998), *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, London: Sage Publications, p. 26.

² Galbraith, J.K. (1962), *The Affluent Society*, Harmondsworth: Penguin books, Pg. 210.

fear of 'missing' something, some form of enjoyment or other. This generated hysteria combined with the feeling that increased consumption would facilitate upward mobility propel the youth to consume more and more. For them, it is no longer desire, or even 'taste', or a specific inclination that are at stake, but a generalized curiosity, driven by a vague sense of unease – it is the imperative to enjoy oneself, to exploit to the full one's potential for thrills, pleasure or gratification. Consumerism has communicated to the youth that happiness has to be measurable. As Tocqueville³ put it, it has to be a well-being measurable in terms of objects and signs; it has to be 'comfort'. Therefore, in order to be happy, one has to keep pace with the consumer culture-clothes, belongings, cars on a yearly, monthly or seasonal basis.

(iii) Relative deprivation and depression- Here, an important question arises – As members of a consumer society, are the youth happy?

My discussions with many youngsters revealed that it was not so. The attractive shop windows, the catchy one-liners in advertisements always made them spend much beyond their means, but still left them frustrated. This is because they saw no end to their feelings of relative deprivation. If they bought a Numero Uno jeans, they found that Levi's was more in vogue and once they acquired the latter, they discovered that Calvin Klein jeans were more in tune with youth fashion. There was a feeling of relative deprivation amongst various categories, as well. While the youth from middle class backgrounds envied the lifestyle of upper middle class or rich youth, the latter craved for a life preferably, in the west. It was noticed that there was a peculiar restlessness in all categories of youth to have more and more within a very short span of time and none of them thought themselves to be a part of the 'in-crowd', though they tried to. Consumption gave them instant happiness but long term depression.

³ See Baudrillard op. cit. , p. 49.

Analysing from a structural perspective, this frustration and restlessness arises because what is consumed are signs (messages, images) rather than commodities. A youngster eats at Pizza Hut or McDonald's not simply to satisfy the need for food, but because it symbolizes a particular style. Baudrillard⁴ points out that these days, we never consume the object in itself (in its use value); we are always manipulating objects (in the broadest sense) as signs which distinguish us either by affiliating us to our own group taken as ideal reference or by marking us off from our group by reference to a group of higher status. Moreover, it is evident that objects are never offered for consumption in absolute disorder. They are always arranged to mark out directive paths, to orient the purchasing impulse towards networks of objects in order to captivate that impulse and bring it to the highest degree of commitment, to the limits of its economic potential. Clothing, machines and toiletries constitute objective pathways, which establish inertial constraints in the consumer: he will move logically from one object to another. He will be caught up in a calculus of objects. Trapped in this web of consumer culture, the youth experience disorder.

(iv) Fashion as the gateway to beauty – Almost all the youngsters admit that they have to be very careful about 'fashion' and generally, it boiled down to clothes, cosmetics and cellphones. Even, students in secondary school admitted that there was a need to dress well, to be casually fashionable. Most of them spent a major part of their pocket money in buying clothes, trinkets or cosmetics. For many, branded clothes were a 'must' while those who could not afford them tried to make-to-do with the fake versions. For many girls, it was imperative to be beautiful. And, beauty was always defined in terms of what they saw on Tv or in the movies. Anyone who was not slim (to the point of being anorexic), was not tall or did not have glowing, fair skin was definitely not beautiful. As a result, most of them, even school children, dieted, used cosmetics laden with chemicals and took

⁴ Ibid., p. 61.

height increasing pills. Moreover, beauty was always related to 'youth'. By looking young, one could look beautiful. This campaign has reached such a height that a sales assistant claimed that a sizeable number of 22-25 year olds bought anti-wrinkle creams regularly. Even, the boys are being drawn into this business of 'beauty'.

With the media popularising the idea of 'metrosexual men' and the women appreciating it, it is no wonder that young boys find themselves appropriating it. As the head of a beauty salon pointed out, college boys today are more conscious than ever about their hairstyles and skin and visit parlours regularly for beauty treatments. In fact, in recent years, there has been a sudden increase in male clientele in the salons. According to many youngsters, boys also have the right to 'look good', at times, it was the demand of the profession they were aiming for – hospitality industry, corporate business etc. Some said that they had joined gyms to 'build bodies' and impress others.

(v) Worshipping the body – This modern day obsession can be traced to the fact that in the consumer package, there is one object finer, more precious and more dazzling than any other. That object is the body. Its rediscovery, in a spirit of physical and sexual liberation, after a millennial age of Puritanism; its omnipresence in advertising, fashion and mass culture; the hygienic, dietic, therapeutic cult which surrounds it, the obsession with youth, elegance, virility/femininity, treatments and regimes, and the sacrificial practices attaching to it all point to the fact that the body has today become an object of salvation. Today, we find that the body has emerged as something that can be used by the entrepreneurs to sell commodities and services as well as being itself a consumed object. And in order to be used as an object to sell things, the body must be 'rediscovered' by its 'owner' and viewed narcissistically. Once it is seen in this manner, people are free to adorn it with objects and to pamper and try to improve it with a variety of services. In other words, people are free to consume goods and services on behalf

of the body and capitalists are free to produce and market all manner of goods and services aimed at the body. However, Baudrillard⁵ contends that it is not bodily drives that are liberated in this way, but merely the drive to buy more goods and services. As a result, it is found that we all have become consumers of our own bodies and we consume an array of goods to enhance them. As pointed out earlier, we have come to seek salvation through the body and this is evident in the therapies, treatments and sacrifices associated with the body.

(vi) Money matters – But, do the youth have the requisite funds to satisfy their needs, desires, whims and curiosities? Most of the youngsters, though they get a pocket money of Rs. 1000/- pm, feel that money is a big problem. Delhi, being a metro, is overpriced and expensive and maintaining a decent lifestyle was quite difficult. Generally, the cost of spending a weekend outside was Rs 300 – 500. Some said that their parents were ‘cool’ about money while others said that theirs were unco-operative.

The pathology of the situation is that the youth today, define the generation gap between themselves and their parents in terms of their monetary position. Those whose parents were quite liberal with money did not feel that there was any generation gap. According to this group, their parents understood their needs well and did not raise any hue and cry about money. Even a 13 year old was given around Rs 1200/- for spending on whatever she likes. But, once the parents started keeping an eye on expenses, the youth complained of generation gap. They could not understand as to why their parents hesitated on spending on children. At times, when they were told that money was being saved for their future, they scorned the idea saying that there was no point of thinking about the future when the present was so bleak. This group of youth generally complained that their parents were very traditional and difficult to adjust and live with. They felt that there was an insurmountable gap between their ideas and thoughts and those of the parents.

⁵ Ibid., Pg. 129.

Moreover, it was found that the youth, generally, adopted a righteous attitude. While being very rigid about their own stance, they demanded that parents 'adjust' to their wishes and demands. A confident, aggressive lot, the youth believe that being 'modern', they were 'right' and the parents being 'traditional' were bound to be 'wrong' and so should remould themselves to the tastes of their children. But, in all, the conflict between parents and children is not, as Kingsley Davis⁶ opined, about differences in orientation or values but about pocket money!

(vii) Yearning for private space – This tension centering on money compels the youth to think in terms of getting a job as soon as possible. Moreover, as Ram Ahuja⁷ points out, young men and women do realize that financial independence would free them from the authority of their families, and give them the requisite 'independence and private space'. And, as this study reveals, the youth are not interested in government jobs or those which require a long duration of patience and struggle. The most sought-after jobs are those in the call centres since they promise good pay-packets, loads of fun and lesser working hours. Moreover, they exude a feel of America which is so heady. According to almost all the youngsters, their ideal is to work in a MNC and preferably, settle abroad or in the plush apartments or penthouses of Gurgaon. Hard work and measly pay packets were not for them. They wanted a professional life which would let them enjoy to the hilt.

According to Gerald Leslie⁸, the combination of industrialization, urbanization, and ideals of freedom, individualism and social equality provided what no influences on family had done for about two thousand years – the prospect of an alternative way of living. And, this prospect seems to have been eagerly grabbed by the youth. For them an alternative way of life (characterized by no responsibility towards kinsmen, unlimited freedom, a certain degree of affluence

⁶ Davis, K. (1940), "The Sociology of Parent – Youth Conflict" in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 5, Pg. 523 – 534.

⁷ Ahuja, R. (1993), *Indian Social System*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications, p. 67.

⁸ Leslie, G. R. (1982), *The Family in Social Context*, London : Oxford University Press, Pg. 106.

etc.) is the only way of life. They favour what Zimmerman⁹ called an 'atomistic family' since it suits their interests better.

(viii) Negotiating with globalization – It was found that most of the youth as well as the elders believe that the forces of globalization have more of positive aspects than negative ones. While admitting that globalization has ushered in a westernized, or more specifically, an Americanised culture, they feel that more than that, it has given a big boost to the sagging and stagnant Indian economy. For the youth, globalization has ushered in new goods and services and hence made the markets competitive. As one young professional opined, 'Now, we are no longer frogs in the well waiting for NRI uncles and aunts to bring us internationally acclaimed goods. We have the same in India and at reduced prices'. The youngsters believe that with increased exposure, they can keep pace with the trends in international fashion and education. Also, the young and the old alike, agree that without globalization and the subsequent advent of MNCs, lakhs of youth would have remained unemployed. The new forces in the economy have been instrumental in giving a fillip to the careers of many young men and women. At the same time, some youth do defer and point out that 'swadeshi' should not be swept away by the 'videshi' and that the functioning of the MNCs should be regulated and controlled.

(ix) Rooted in a indigenous traditions – However, it may be contended that even though the youth are dazzled by the influx of westernized ideas, they have not lost touch with Indian values and traditions. They might sport western outfits and make-up but do not hesitate to trust in ancient Indian sciences of astrology and palmistry. They love pizzas and burgers but their favourite food was to be home-made. All of them made it a point to assert that whatever might be the cosmetic changes, they were 'Indians at heart'. Despite all their accoutrements of modernity, the youth were quite traditional at heart. Most of them did not approve

⁹Ahuja, op. cit., p. 70.

of many of their age group wearing revealing clothes or making an open show of affections. Even, some couples pointed out that though they were quite liberal, they shied away from even holding hands in public places; areas like Priya's afforded a lot of privacy since they were free from the prying and disapproving gaze of the elders. Also, many youngsters said that though they complained about their parents behind their backs, they were quite respectful to parents in their presence and made it their 'fundamental duty' to listen to whatever they said. In the macro scenario, though the youth presented a broad-minded outlook, many were still attached to parochial loyalties. A number of young students and professionals were hesitant about inter-religious marriage out of sheer ethnocentrism or of fear of social ostracism. They also felt that it was to be a political catastrophe if India had any foreign born holding an influential post.

(x) A self-centered attitude – It has been rightly pointed out by many elderly respondents that the youth of today are aggressive, confident, focussed and ambitious. Nevertheless, it was found that they were unaware of ground realities and tended to view the world with rose-tinted glasses. Most of them turned a blind eye to problems like poverty, unemployment, corruption etc. Their excuse was that since these problems did not concern them, they never even thought about it. Their world was far removed from these social malaises and they believed that if some people were poor and unemployed (like the urchins at Priya complex), it was their responsibility and that of the government to do something about it. They were concerned only about their personal advancements and were not motivated towards social welfare. Many youngsters had no concern or solutions for various social issues; all that they yearned for was a sanitised India or a 'mini-America'. But, as it was found, their contribution towards realizing their dreams was nil. Though flaunting a highly sophisticated aura, most youngsters showed an abysmal lack of civic sense. They rarely used dustbins, littered the pavements with cigarette

buds, foodstuffs or packets and used some corners as toilets. Moreover, they abused the beggar children and some even pelted stones at them.

Moreover, it was found that many youth expected to be served everything on a platter– a professional degree, a job, a fat income. They believed that there should be short-cuts to success. In this study, their hunger for instant satisfaction was most notable.

(xi) Popularity of ‘culture of the youth’ – A comprehensive study of youth culture indicates that the youthfulness of youth culture has been quite contagious. Now, people of all ages want to be youthful. Berger¹⁰ has pointed out that in common usage, when we describe persons as ‘youthful’, we mean that they tend to manifest certain qualities in their behaviour which seem to be empirically associated with tender years. The medium has also successfully popularised the culture of the youth – to look young and feel young is to look and feel beautiful which subsequently, is the mantra to success. People of all ages are exhorted to throw themselves with full passion and intensity into those activities that promise thrills and excitement and are indicative of youthful vivacity and vigour. Also, it cannot be denied that the youth culture has assumed such attractive proportions that people of other ages cannot help but be drawn towards it. Pre-teens try to imitate the youth in the manner of dress and attitude and also apply make-up to look older.

Middle – aged people also tried to dress as colourfully and flamboyantly as the youth and tried to assume the youthful, spontaneous and energetic attitude. Some in this category pointed out, that while venturing to youth-dominated places like the Priya complex, they had to abide by some norms of youth culture so that they would not feel out of place. With the Indian society becoming younger by the day, in the light of the increasing youth population, it appears as if the youngsters are dictating the norms of conduct to others. Their scornful or at best, condescending attitude towards anything or anyone ‘old’ or ‘outdated’ has been aptly noticed and

¹⁰ Berger, B.M. (1963) “On Youthfulness of Youth Culture”, *Social Research*, Vol. 30(3), Pg. 320.

consequently for many elders, being youthful has become an absolute, religious imperative.

This study on Priya complex attempts to locate the youth in a consumerist culture. Various aspects of metropolitan youth culture have been revealed in the process by which the youth negotiate with the new consumption-oriented society. While they are confident in dealing with the forces of westernization, their confusion in situating themselves in the dialectics between tradition and modernity is also palpable. The youth culture comes across as a curious mix of candidness, spontaneity, positive energy, lack of judiciousness, irreverence etc.

CONCLUSION

It cannot be denied that the world (here, we mean the India of today) is being swept by an unprecedented wave of 'youthfulness'. With the society getting progressively younger in terms of its population, youth culture has emerged as a potent area of study. What is called modern youth culture was shaped by historical forces and processes, the most important being the massive changes in economic, social and cultural norms in the recent past. Most importantly, the liberalization package designed to introduce India into the arena of global economy altered the lives of a large section of the society. For one, it brought about a radical change in the outlook, orientation and cultural practices of the youth as well as their parents. They have become far more international in their outlook and aspirations, more sophisticated and liberal in lifestyle and attitudes. We find that the coming of liberalization and globalization marks a watershed in India's cultural history. However, the youth find themselves caught in the exciting human drama arising from the creative tension between modern science and technology (which is closely inter-twined with a western way of life, with an acquisitive and consumerism – oriented culture of post-industrial society) on one hand and indigenous tradition and culture on the other.

While studying the various dimensions of youth culture in diverse cultural sites, diverse manifestations of culture emerge. Through these, one attempts at a certain cultural pattern. It will be wrong to assume that there can be a singular understanding of youth culture in present times. We need to realize that one cannot have grand theorizing. The totalizing definition of youth culture is like the notion of classical brahmannical understanding which thereby ignores the heterogeneous nature of youth culture and thus does injustice to the latter. Therefore, an attempt has been made to develop an elastic notion of youth culture as it emerges through the study of the two sites.

The ethnographic account of the college, a site of learning, revealed that the youth have redefined the meanings of various domains of life. And, the idea behind this redefinition is utilitarianism. Anything that does not serve a function is discarded. For example, they appreciate education and knowledge in so far as it serves to provide them with 'comfortable' jobs. Class lectures are seen as unimportant generally; the students would rather join coaching classes and tuitions which provide relevant information in a capsule module. In the same vein, love/romance is seen as a virtue as long as one can have the requisite quota of 'fun' and the relationship does not encroach into other spheres : of friends, hobbies etc. Love/romance is defined in terms of 'understanding relationship' and 'giving each other space' but ultimately means that it should not demand commitments or responsibilities.

The youth came across as a curious bundle of contradictions. They presented themselves as a focussed, mature lot who are capable of independent thinking and rationalized behaviour. Most of them were seriously evaluating their career prospects even at this young age and they had mature views on a number of issues. But then, they were anything but mature in a number of areas, for example, in their relationship with parents. All their flexibility, rationale and maturity deserted them while either demanding more pocket money from their parents or expecting the latter to adjust to their whims and fancies. One of the important findings of this work has been the almost blind self-righteousness of the youth vis-à-vis their parents. They want the parents to radically modify their outlook to suit the present generation, expect that they should never be questioned or reprimanded for their behaviour since they know 'best'. Of course, they are open to a dialogue provided the outcome is always in their favour.

Carrying the argument further, the youth are found to be obsessed with the idea of appearing modern, especially with respect to love, marriage and family. They shun the idea of marriage without love or arranged marriage and are wary of the

prospect of staying in a joint family. They feel that a joint family would shackle their freedom and independence. They evoke the western ideals of love, marriage and family and show them in a superior light vis-à-vis what they term as 'archaic' Indian notions. While being very broad-minded and liberal on these issues, they tended to be quite parochial in their views on status and class. It was quite evident that most of the youth preferred to have friends belonging to their own class or being able to flaunt the same or similar status and symbols in matters of clothes, vehicles etc. It was very rare to find a person from a very privileged background being friends with another from a humble family. Some did own up that one could only 'relate' to peers from the same socio-economic background. It was quite difficult otherwise.

It was found that in the fast-paced world, caste has lost out to class in the sphere of social engagement. For today's youth, caste is a very ambiguous term. The fraying of wider kinship ties and the demands of a metropolitan life have diluted caste identity to a considerable extent. Some students confided that their parents were quite caste conscious but, they themselves, never felt the need to be the same. Instead, they constituted their own hierarchy on the basis of class or status considerations. To whom to talk to, socialize with, scorn upon or envy –all these were decided on the basis of the flaunted status symbols.

The ethnographic study of the market complex, a site of consumption, is more specific. It attempts to situate the metropolitan youth culture in an era of aggressive marketing and mindless consumerism. Here, it is found that the desire of the youth for instant gratification becomes more obvious. And the desire is compounded by a herd mentality. The youngsters do not know when to stop buying since 'all they want is everything'. They seek to deal with the identity crisis they might be facing by seeking solace in the modern, consumer culture. They believe in spending on an object not simply because it is attractive, important or useful but also because the others have it. Thus, they enter into a mad race of consumption

which they do acknowledge leads to more pain than gain. An insecurity does exist that if they lack some symbols, they might be rejected by their peers or may be deprived of certain experiences of life.

In their quest for immediate satisfaction of desires, they generally prefer short-cuts to career. Not for them, the gruelling years of studying to enter into engineering or medical colleges or management institutes. They would rather prefer to work in call-centres during the night and shop and party away during the day. It was felt that the youth wanted life to be a prolonged period of enjoyment. What they hankered for was a 'mini-America', an Americanized lifestyle etc. In their world, what existed ideally was glitz and glamour; petty problems had no place.

What was apparent during the course of study was that the advertising agencies have succeeded in their efforts oriented towards the mind-management of the youth to a considerable extent. We find that the idea of 'body beautiful' has been lapped up by the youth. When they spend, it is on external trappings, when they define personality, it is in terms of 'good figure', attractive looks, expensive clothes etc. They learn early that the body is to be glorified and pampered because that is what the world sees. And this is authenticated by the advent of more and more jobs in the career market which demand pleasing personality (which means riveting looks, clever make-up and attractive sartorial sense) and an ability to speak English in exchange of a very good remuneration. No wonder, the youth are in constant need of money to enrich their lifestyle and make themselves more 'presentable'.

An interesting finding of this study in the market was an idea of the growing popularity of the 'culture of the youth'. Youth has been given a broader connotation – it implies energy, vibrance, beauty and most importantly, an exciting life. Slowly but surely and steadily, all the characteristics associated with the young people and their culture/sub-culture are being imbibed by those of other age groups, as well. The positive energy of the youth is being treated as alchemy.

As a result, we not only find the media and advertising agencies extolling the virtues of youth power but also attracting others towards it. No wonder, we find that from upper primary school students to middle aged people, everyone is fascinated by the 'culture of the youth'. They desperately want to look young (in the 18-25 age category) and so dress like the young and also use the phraseology normally associated with the youth.

While conducting the study at the two sites, it was found that the female subjects had more liberal views on topics of social interest than men. It was felt that with their access to quality education and an exposure to urban life, the girls were attempting to break the age-old shackles and assert their independence. For example, a majority of them preferred to have love marriage. They were also more open to sharing their views on love/romance. Though they were not wary about entering into romantic relationships, they were very mindful of 'private space' which they appeared to be zealously guarding from wider kins, boyfriends and sometimes, parents and siblings. On the other hand, it was found that the male students at both the sites tended to be a bit more conservative. They were extremely hesitant in sharing their views on personal topics like love and marriage. And when they did so, unlike their female counterparts, they preferred to remain unattached, that is, have no engagement with romance, if possible. They also were more inclined towards arranged marriage. It was also found that the boys were more conscious of components like caste, religion etc. than the girls. For the latter, status considerations were more important than any other.

At both the sites, it was found that apart from the occasional complaints against parents, the youth were rooted to family values. Despite their insistence on being 'free', they did listen to parental advice and even acted upon it. Many opined that their family was at the centre of their existence. But the notion of 'family' has become quite restricted. It is now limited to the parents and siblings only. Generally, the youth have an attitude of disdain or indifference towards wider

kins. The general belief is that relatives do not matter in one's immediate sphere of interaction and even when they do, they are interfering and irritating. As a result, most of them do not have strong ties with their natal families.

It was found that the youth at the college as well as the market were extremely conscious of personal appearance. They spent a major chunk of their pocket money on personal grooming. Both girls and boys spent on gyms and in beauty parlours, on clothes, accessories etc. The body was beautified, perfumed, pampered and decorated. The presentation of self in everyday life assumed a lot of importance. Here, we also found the evolving generation of 'metrosexual men' who are quite concerned with portraying themselves as flamboyant, savvy and fashionable.

In the college, the youth appeared to have definite, specific and concretized opinions on diverse topics as career, politics, modernity, caste/class equations. They were articulate about their views and put forth a number of incisive arguments during the interactive sessions. But, the youth at the market place, though quite expressive, were found to be not as intellectually inclined as their counterparts in the college. Though the latter were found to be somewhat comfortable on discussing about personal/ social topics, they at times, appeared to be at a loss while voicing opinions on the political-economic situation of the country, impact of the west etc.

Comparing the data obtained from both the sites, it can be said that the perspectives of both groups of subjects at times, differed only in degree. For example, in the college, the young people either denied the existence of a generation gap between themselves and their parents or even if they did, they talked about it in practical terms (like conflicts over dress, friend circle etc.) and even tried to analyse the reasons for it (like humble backgrounds of parents etc.). But, in the market, it was found that generally, the subjects defined generation gap in a very restricted sense. Almost all of them believed that parents were 'uncool'

and 'rigid' and did not try to understand their need for more pocket money. For them, generation gap meant the inability of parents to keep pace with their demands for more and more money. And, in both the sites, the view was that the older generation needs to change its outlook to some extent and adapt to the new ideas some of which are at odds with aspects of established morality as regards propriety in dress, male/female relations, consumption etc.

In the marketplace, we could know about the views of the older generation on the youth culture which was not possible in the college. The older adults appreciated the vim, vigour, foresight and energy of the youth. They felt that the young people of today were more in tune with the times than their predecessors. However, the adults had a tendency to associate the young's embracing of modernity with moral degeneration. In their view, the young have turned towards an amoral hedonism that finds expression, among other things, in their jost for enjoyment through consumption. Many older people (this includes the store owners also) perceive a tendency among young people to demand satisfaction of their wish to consume even if this is not within their parents' means and describe this as a part of the cultural and moral inadequacy of the young. While acknowledging the superior intelligence of the youth, the elders do feel that though the young seek independence and freedom, they do not accept either authority or duty.

We find that the youth glorify extravagance, adventure and a spirit of experimentation. It is in such a domain of experimentation that youth cultures are generated. This fickle lifestyle means that young people are inclined to take a relativistic view of everything, from the value of educational qualifications to job security. And they are not without reasons for this. Qualifications are increasingly seen as dummy cheques in the 'job market'. The job market too is subject to instability : new flexible working practices, segmentation, mobility.

The important thing is to maintain individual autonomy, an existential freedom that allows room for manoeuvre, in which to turn around. Young people also

explore this form of mobility as consumers. Through the fickle cycles of fashion, for instance Why are young people so interested in manipulating their appearance? Because fashion always provides an opportunity for a break with normality, for a permanent quest for originality. The need to be 'original' does not correspond only to the domain of 'individualistic narcissism', in which the world is the mirror in which the young person sees himself/herself : what is at stake here is a form of 'relational narcissism' in which the young people feel themselves to be the mirror into which the rest of the world gazes.

Finally, in the 'to and fro of life', it is curious to observe that the movement made by parents in order to socialize their children gives rise to a reflected movement, in which the parents are also socialized by their sons and daughters, embracing a youth culture which is an increasingly central point of reference. Hence the investment made by the older generations in preserving a youthful image.

Situating this study in the light of previous researches, it may be said that youth culture is neither a contraculture nor a caricature of adult culture. Rather, it is a response to the socio-politico-economic reality of the times while attempting to make sense of the latter. And, the youth culture is not solely oriented toward alienating the young people from the larger society. Granted, that the youth are increasingly imbibing the western lifestyles, but they also respect the indigenous values and traditions. Their mission, it appears, is to bring about the confluence of what is best in both-the east and the west. Contrary to popular opinion, it is not only the males who are the active proponents of youth culture. The females are also at par with them and are being granted more and more freedom to adopt the modern tenets of youth culture. Though the elders might accuse them of frivolity, the youth do have a mission : a mission to succeed which is conditioned by the value climates of their subculture.

Though a sincere attempt has been made to study the various dimensions of youth culture, certain areas demand further research at a higher level. The social and

psychological impact of the social system upon youth culture, the association structures of the youth and the sources of adolescent value systems are some areas which require penetrating analysis. A further insight can also be obtained by studying the socialization process of the youth in many other sites, as for example, the family, youth wings of political parties, young professionals in offices etc. A number of variables like caste, family background, parental position in the community etc. can also be considered to broaden the contours of research. The present study in the area is not as extensive, perhaps due to limited resources and time. But, it has been instrumental in addressing a number of pertinent questions and arousing interest in many avenues youth culture.

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