

**Culture of Consumption in Urban India  
A Study of the Middle Class in Hyderabad**

Thesis submitted for  
The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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This is to certify that the research embodied in the present thesis entitled,  
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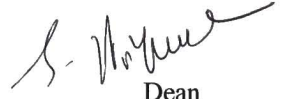


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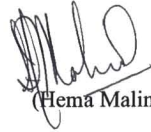
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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that the research embodied in this thesis entitled, “Culture of Consumption in Urban India: A Study of the Middle Class in Hyderabad” is an original work carried out by me for the award of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Hyderabad.

I declare to the best of my knowledge that no part of this thesis was earlier submitted for the award of research degree of any other University.

**Signature of the Candidate**

  
(Hema Malini Waghray)

## Preface

As a subject in the field, one is straddling two spheres at the same time, as a part of the process of change and an onlooker. As a sociologist, one is constantly a part of society and at the same time, an observer, a critic, and a consumer. As one was situated in a middle class, upper caste, salaried and working parents' household, one grew up in a conservative; goal oriented (read marriage) family. A traditional family that believed in educating the daughters only to find eligible boys, education being important but not a priority in terms of a purposeful, job-oriented study.

Catching glimpses of the West in late night English movies (*Heat and Dust*, *36 Chowringhee Lane* etc), American pop music on late night TV (*Hot Tracks*), *Mills and Boons* read surreptitiously, and late night parties only a dream, we siblings relentlessly devoured modernity on the sly through the same 'developmentalist' government-controlled Indian television –Doordarshan.

The experience of shopping guided by norms of decency (as in 'decent' clothes that cover the body) and also uniqueness; window gazing and fairprice-store parental purchases which were the law, created the desire symbolic of the perpetually felt sense of unfreedoms and oppressions of a typical girls' growing up in a small town that 'was' Hyderabad. The four weddings in the family of this researcher, which happened in a spate after 1989- an avenue for consumption in excess quite symbolic of the changes in the economy. This coincided with enrolling into a liberal arts college and a new set of 'cool' friends discussing (more like observing) *The Bold and the Beautiful* and pop music, and possibly the rumblings of distant clouds of liberalization fast approaching. The weddings also provided for an expenditure of excess from the household income, which had been saved exceptionally for this very purpose.

Generous shopping -as compared to any other time in the past and watching new stores come up, one chanced upon an article on “The Culture Industry” by Nirmal Goswami (1991) at the same time. Reading it again and again felt like India was on the brink of an important landmark event and one felt a part of it. One also was witness to the “opening up of the skies” with the cable TV from 1992 onwards. Reading Adorno and Horkheimer’s essay on the culture industry and Marcuse’s *One Dimensional Man* in the MA class cleared the picture some, but made one curious about change itself.

It seemed that the entertainment industry would cart off everything out of the sacred arena, dilute culture, and sell everything for a price. Right from traditional and ethnic crafts made available in the stores, to the passion of consuming everything western through the media. The pain of losing and gaining at the same time created for the curiosity and the motivation to understand this dubious going on.

The thought that negative and possibly irreversible “effects” were to follow was never too far away. The foreboding tone of the Critical School and the later critique set the stage for the beginnings of a curious self. Adorno’s (136) analysis, which said that “...the elements of culture, art and distraction, are subordinated to one end and subsumed under one false formula: the totality of the culture industry. It consists of repetition”-only made one’s interest more firm. It was only a matter of what part of the field one ought to concentrate upon that was left to be decided.

Before globalisation became a buzzword, before the onslaught of choices in stores, before the hurried activity set forth by global capital, there was the beginning. One big store, one big mall, one big corporate word that only seems to have multiplied, was changing the city’s landscape. Capital set forth the symbolic economy rolling. All around were visible the symbols of value. People were watching this

happen, and were being watched. The symbols kept changing based on calculations and manipulations.

Becoming a consumer was a process in itself. Living in denial sometimes and giving into the demand; being part of the dominant ideology and also wanting to subvert the ideology of consumption; being essentially conservative middle class and also converting into liberal upper middle class-this was a process and a part of growing up in the glut of consumption in Hyderabad. Being in the midst of it all meant being self-conscious of one's situatedness. Growing to understand is what this work is about.

As a natural conclusion to all this, in retrospect there was an interest in the "lived experiences" of the people. If consumption is the process of decoding culture (Bourdieu 1984), then this new process required new forms of knowledge and new ways of behavior. Being a consumer meant living and interacting constantly with more of the same kind, who were a part of the life world and the 'observed'. This prompted me to focus on the possibilities of the research project where the people discuss elaborately about their lived experiences. The project grew out of such a delineated scenario.

This work would have been unattainable without my supervisor Professor Vinod Pavarala's unrelenting support. I specially wish to thank him for this.

I also wish to thank my other supervisor Dr. K. Laxmi Narayan for his support. To the head of the department Professor Chandrasekhar Bhat, I owe thanks for permitting me to wrap it all up. Professor E. Hari Babu, who was my guide in M Phil helped me transition seamlessly to a doctoral course. I also wish to thank the office staff- Mr. Madhusudhan, Mr. Narayan Gupta, and Mr. Tirupatiah for their timely help.

To Dr. Sasheej Hegde I owe special thanks for throwing light on certain aspects of my work. To the people at Anveshi who opened up their doors for me – someone who sat there forever and to Vijaya for the countless teas - thank you.

This venture is the work of a mother of two and the support system for the same has been enormous. A mother's work is never done, and it is working a "double shift" that I learnt it the hard way, to balance it all out and to do it well. A family of nature and a family of nurture is what describes best my support system. To chacha and chachi; chotu, tidda, pappu, pinky, anju for the possibility of the self. There is no debt there; they are just there- always- through consumption and conservation. My other parents- mummy and bawa, especially mummy for being the tireless nurturer for my children and me. Meera bua has been with me in her curiosity and her support.

Writing the acknowledgements feels like a baby born after an unnaturally long gestation. It is then an end but also a visible beginning. To Ishaan and Naina- you have always been there peopling my location forever. This is about you and the life ahead.

Yogender, the possibilities are endless with you- and without you, this work would not have been done at all.

Then comes the full stop to all life- the Goddess. The ether consumed everyday. The consumption of religious rituals, the mango leaves, the new clothes, the sweetmeats, the *madi*, and the pundit. Simple obeisance to all.

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## 1. Introduction

If luxury is not a good way of supporting or promoting an economy, it is a means of holding, of fascinating, a society... (A)t the very deepest levels of material life, there is at work... unconscious pressures of economies...(Braudel, 1979:333).

Braudel, in his three-volume work, *The Wheels of Commerce* gives a fascinating account of the economic processes of the world and of the development of capitalism since the early 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The second volume deals solely with the issue of consumption. He examines consumption of material culture, which has developed as part of capitalist process of development. Consumption, according to Falk (1995:95) means using up, expenditure, and eating - generic concepts to do with natural and cultural life processes. According to Williams (1985:78), the word 'consume' had "an unfavorable sense, it meant to destroy, to use up, to waste, (and) to exhaust". One also consumes to survive. In this regard, the idea of production is not far behind. What is consumed also needs to be produced. As a twosome, consumption and production can be situated historically to gather insights into economies and societies. Consumption, according to Appadurai (1995:79), evolves as "the phenomenological marker of time left over from work, produced by work, and justified by work". Consumption is what comes after work, it's the leisure time well deserved which constitutes consumption. Production is situated in the economic base as in the mode of production, while consumption as a process is situated in the superstructure comprising of such things as culture. In this sense, consumption is epiphenomenal. However, the two are inter-related. One is either always involved in the production process or is engaged in consumption.

Consumption is cultural; it does not remain a simple act of eating or drinking, but absorbs a social dimension. The social dimensionality is the focus of this study. Consumption is social in the sense of one's lived experiences, which are a part of everyday life patterns as markers of identities, as social status symbols, as statements about one's self. What one consumes is linked to the class to which one belongs. The structural inequalities of a society get graphically obvious when one examines the consumption patterns of different class groups in a quantitative study. Amazingly, however, the consumption patterns are not always the clearest markers of one's income levels. Consumption patterns are linked to identity in the sense that different groups of people might consume different things according to their likes and dislikes irrespective of the levels of income. The focus of the present study is to understand how the middle class as a category offers a variety in understanding the concept of consumption at the level of one's everyday life experience. The quantitative data typically indicate patterns of consumption, which vary according to income levels. At the level of lived experiences, consumption is something that is an overlap between one's life history, the income levels, the education level of the present, and the previous generation in a family. The focus on the everyday life world brings together this overlap.

Consumption has a new dimension in the context of the changes after globalization in Hyderabad, the capital city of the state of Andhra Pradesh in south India. The economic policies of the government in the late eighties and early nineties enabled the flow of global capital into the markets. This led to a steep rise in the levels of income for all social classes. Consumption is seen in the traditional areas of social life- from expenditure during festivals, weddings, and rites of passage. It has ensconced itself in newer and numerous ways of spending. This expenditure is not only about expelling the surplus generated by the system or one's disposable income. For the

middle class in Hyderabad, it is about saving to spend on an expensive, prestigious education abroad, a vacation abroad, indulging in the long forgotten rituals of a daughter's wedding and many such cultural aspects. Capital has found its forte in the Indian market, and my study is about understanding the 'play' of capital. What is happening to the extra money in the households? How do people make sense of the very idea of spending-a-little-more in their everyday lives? These are some of the questions I seek to address in this study.

Historically, consumption has always existed even in the most primitive of societies. It is, hence, not a 'modern' aspect of a 'modern' economy. Conceptually, it has been a part of the disciplines of economics and anthropology. For anthropology, it is a subject of interest while studying the primitive societies. Even in societies with a subsistence economy, or the underdeveloped 'poor economies', consumption has always been a part. In the context of globalisation, consumption gathers momentum and acquires new meanings. Consumption as a part of the capitalist process of development of the world economy represents globalization.

While consumption itself is not a new phenomenon, what is new is the culture of consumption. It is the force of consumption, in the western sociological sense of the term, which has acquired a new meaning. The market and the economic and financial institutions are exploring this novelty. To consume is to eat, to drink, to devour, to put away, and to use- all this from the jargon of synonyms found in the lexicon of the computer. Between the number crunching of the market and the simplicity of the term, lies the context of this study. The numbers serve the purpose of planning and policymaking. They are useful in terms of gathering consumer information, product information and so on. The data are an indicator for the economy to go forth with its

planning and progress. A qualitative experience enhances the understanding at a human level. The colorful texture of lived experiences makes one realize that numbers hide realities more than reveal the truths.

What one consumes as food and as food for thought forms one's identities. If the consumption basket has a minimum level of all food groups according to the nutritionist, then the growth is optimum. Likewise, one's consuming habit, one's lifestyle puts one in a particular position in the social structure. In the process of production, the producer creates the product and in the process of consumption, the product gets a life of its own.

Another ground for analysis is where consumption is a product of the production process and has an economic connotation. This is largely in use by the economists, demographers, and market research agencies. It is a quantitative term describing expenditure. It also describes the sumptuary patterns of a populace.

Consumption is the various ways of living itself. It is the new meaning one has for organizing space in the house; the appearance of the house; the idea of aesthetic beauty in and around the house and the person, new forms of expenditure for the same. Notions of feeling good, looking good and the idea of wanting to do something different drive these expenditure patterns. The various theories of consumption offer interesting perspectives. One can adapt a structural perspective where consumption is class-specific and works to further social inequalities. Or consumption is about the work after production, in the time left over from work. Consumption is the new ways of living life, it is the decoding of culture. Consumption is also about one's status level in the society; what one consumes puts one in dialogue with the others- a dialogue for gaining or losing prestige. Consumption is about the material objects and things. It is also about the

relation that is built around the exchange of such things. In this sense consumption is not merely a transfer of objects but a transfer of feelings and emotions as well.

It is useful to draw upon the rich literature available in sociological as well as the economic and cultural fields of enquiry to gain a comprehensive understanding of consumption.

## **Theoretical Approaches to Consumption**

### Classical Sociological Theorists

#### *Karl Marx*

The materialistic approach to consumption is primarily driven by Marx's work, specifically, *Capital* Vol 1 and the *Grundrisse*. According to Marx, the process of production, exchange, distribution, and consumption comprise a chain, which typically explains the economic phenomena. It is in consumption that products become objects of gratification, of individual appropriation. In consumption, the product steps out of the circuit of production- distribution-exchange and becomes a direct object and servant of individual needs, and satisfies the need in being consumed. Thus, production appears as the point of departure, consumption as the conclusion. Consumption is conceived not only as a terminal point but also as an end-in-itself. It reacts in turn upon the point of departure and initiates the whole process anew.

Production is also immediately consumption. (C)onsumption is subjective and objective: the individual not only develops his abilities in production, but also expends them, uses them up in the act of production...Likewise, consumption of raw material, which loses its natural form and composition by being used up. The act of production is therefore in all its moments also an act of consumption. Production as directly identical with consumption, and consumption as directly coincident with production, is termed by them productive consumption. Consumption is also immediately production just as in nature the consumption of the elements and chemical substance is the production of the plant. (Marx, 1973:90)

For Marx, the plant is made up of, or consumes (water, minerals) and becomes a product- the plant. One consumes in order to become a product. It is clear that in taking in food, which is a form of consumption, the human being produces his own body. However, this is also true of every kind of consumption which in one way or another produces human beings in some particular aspect. However “this production which is identical with consumption is secondary, it is derived from the destruction of the prior product. In the former, the producer objectified himself, in the latter; the object he created personifies itself”. However, at the same time, a mediating movement takes place between the two. Production mediates consumption; it creates the latter’s material; without it, consumption would lack an object. However, consumption also mediates production, in that it alone creates the idea of the product to be produced. As to who decides the use-value, how it is decided and deciphered for the ‘users’ ‘the consumers’ is an important aside to all this.

Marx’s conception of consumption is limiting in its neglect of the signified aspect of products, which become objects in the making. The use-value of a product is not limited to ‘what is assigned to it by the producers.’ Use-value is also deciphered first by the consumers themselves and then by the media/advertising. A vacant house’s use-value is not lost because there is no one living in it. A vacant house implies a second home- in reality talks of affluence and luxury for the owner. Likewise, ownership of a

garment, which is not worn, implies that the garment is yet to be worn and is meant for special occasions. It will be worn rarely – hence possesses a sacredness. In addition, its “brand” established through advertising makes it a mere “ownership” material. Its use-value is in the ownership in a social context of family/friends/community.

The idea of consumption as something existing prior to the production process, as an external idea is useful in understanding the conceptual basis for the importance of the “social” in and before the “economic”. Marx says that consumption has the object of production, the product, as a need. It is consumption that creates the product in its subjective form. There is no production without a need; consumption reproduces the need. The identity of a product is established in consumption without which the product is just an object -waiting to be consumed or is ignored.

According to Marx, a commodity is work of man on materials furnished by nature. Man changes this form of material into something useful. An object has use-value for man. The labour time it costs to produce an object differs in quantity and quality. The value of the object depends on this difference of expenditure of labour, which is a qualitative, and a quantitative difference. Labour for Marx is social in this context. Value is endowed upon the object only in the process of exchange. Burke (1996:5) on the other hand says that it is too simplistic to analyze about commodities in this manner. Commodities are for him not just products of capitalist process of accumulation. If this is so, it does not explain the strong presence of “gift” in pre-capitalist societies. Fetishism, for Burke is

the thing having a life outside of the producer of the thing, is more than the meaning invested in goods; it is also the accumulated power of commodities to actually constitute, organize and relate people, institutions and discourses to contain within themselves the forms of consciousness through which capitalism manufactures its subjects. (p.5)

place of consumption in the overall operation of the system? What are the consequences of consumption? What purpose does it serve? If consumption is about understanding the cultural codes around us, then the purpose of such an effort, which is everyday life itself, is integrating people into an intelligible social world (Slater, 1997:151).

Durkheim's idea of the fetish or the totem is useful in analyzing his concepts of consumption. The sense of being a society is projected on to the totem- the sacred animal or the thing. This sense of representation of solidarity on to an animal provides for the tribes or family's identity. For Durkheim, this is essential to solidarity. Knowledge of decoding such a representation is essential to the 'project of creating intelligibility.' Religious rituals for Durkheim denote a society coming together for solidarity. They signify feeling of community. According to Durkheim, rituals and things make the social order visible and effective: "in a sense, patterns of consumption are like a map of social order (Slater, 1997:149)". Knowledge of this map is consumption, is what endows social order onto a society. Consumption in this sense is a part of the larger social system and is related to the other parts of the social system. Conversely, not having enough knowledge of a social map would put a person in an uncomfortable situation and s/he might not 'fit in' the group.

Durkheim would say that in today's context where there have been important changes- socially and economically, in terms of globalization, the values in a society would change drastically. This could lead to "normlessness" or anomie. "Anomie is a social condition in which there is lack of cohesion and order, especially in relation to norms and values. If something disrupts the usual pattern of social life and creates a situation in which it is unclear just what norms apply, then anomie can result (Johnson, 1995:14)". A functionalists' perspective on the cultural changes observable in the various media- television and cinema for example- would be to announce the death of

'values' in the Indian context. Consumption in that sense is about being able to integrate into the changing society.

*Max Weber*

For our purpose, the concept of status as described by Weber is useful in the context of consumption. A status group is a "collectivity of persons enjoying a similar life-style, a common moral system, a unifying language or culture, whose separateness within society is bound up with their monopoly of cultural privilege (Holton and Turner 1989:137)". Therefore, a status group shares the same consumption patterns and culture. Consumption of certain kinds of things, having an education in a certain college etc., all is part of belonging to a status group. Consumption for Weber would be a collective class-based phenomenon, which is shared by a group, and this group would be the status group. Therefore, consumption gives the status group an identity. If the basis for similar statuses is similar lifestyles, then it implies that one's lifestyle is a marker of what one consumes. The economic variable of income might be similar or equal for a certain group of people, but if they do not share the same consumption patterns or lifestyle then they do not belong to the same status group or class.

Consumption is about living life in a particular way; it is about making a statement. Socially, consumption is about making an announcement that you are a person with a particular taste and that you shop in a particular place. This is not necessarily about sharing the same class. Nevertheless, status groups, emerge because of a certain lifestyle and alternatively as a rejection of certain forms of things. What one likes and dislikes, what one wears, and where one shops are all part of consumption and a part of belonging to a status group. Bourdieu has used this aspect of status in the idea of distinction as a system of judgment of taste separating individuals because of their

inheritance and development of different forms of culture (Holton and Turner, 1989:137).

What Weber's analysis ignores is the way in which individual creativity and style make for a change itself. Weber's sociology is located in the context of transformation from traditional forms of society to modern, rational forms of society. For him rationalization produced modernity. Consumption is located in the realm of the modern. It is that which cushions the subjects of the modern world against the harsh realities of a rational world. If rationalization is the 'iron cage' from which there is no escape, then one could say that consumption provides for the ultimate pleasure principle that brings the individual into the social world, enveloped in its effects of entertainment, the travel industry, and the shopping world. According to Weber, it is the family in the private sphere, which provides relaxation and enjoyment away from the vagaries of work in the public sphere. Then, consumption is the avenue for the families in the modern period to take care of the 'selves' and prepare again for work the next day. Rationalization is the ultimate end of capitalism, but consumption brings capitalism back into itself. Consumption overlaps both the private and the public realms, which is why it seems all too pervasive; which is why it seems that there is no escape from it.

### Emergence of Industrial Capitalism

A seminal work on the materialistic economy is by Fernand Braudel. For Braudel, consumption is seen in the shadowy regions of an economy, not immediately apparent but very important nevertheless. He says that the economy consists of two vast areas: production and consumption. One completes and destroys; the other renews and starts afresh. For him consumption is the market economy –the mechanisms of production and exchange, linked to rural activities, small shops, and workshops, to

banks, exchanges, fairs, and markets. Market in old days was for Braudel 'transparent' and had visible realities with easily observed processes that took place within them. Now, the system of the modern market is such that it 'hides' the obvious realities so that other signs can exist. These signs are what capitalism works at in the advertising industry. It is the crucial part of the system – apart from manufacturing that is involved in generating surplus. For Braudel, the zone of consumption is the "infra-red zone" in the shadows lying underneath the economy. According to him, the elementary, basic activity, which went on, was that of consumption which had a huge volume to it. This rich zone, like a layer covering the earth, Braudel calls the "material life or material civilization".

Consumption starts and at the same time renews the economy. If production 'completes' or 'destroys' the economy, puts an end to the 'product' at the end of the assembly line, consumption takes it from there and starts the process anew. Without consumption, production is a waste and without production, consumption is not possible at all. Without consumers at the end of the line, nothing would be produced.

For Braudel, the market economy of the late 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries of the whole world was gearing up for a capitalist ethic in the economy. Capitalism, with its profit/money/accumulation for its own sake came later. The market economy with consumption as its product, as its goal, was always present, before capitalism. This shadowy zone over the market economy represents the favored domain of capitalism. Without this zone, capitalism is unthinkable: this is where it takes up residence and prospers.

Chandra Mukherji (Appadurai, 1986:37) proposes a similar view. According to Mukherji, a materialist culture and consciousness oriented to products and goods from all over the world was the prerequisite for the technological revolution of industrial

capitalism. A critique to Weber's theory of the ethic of capitalism, Mukherji explains the occidental capitalisms. She places taste, demand, and fashion at the centre of the argument and says that these are the grounds for capitalisms in the East. Capitalism, took firm hold in the East due to the prior exposure of these societies to various products from the West. The products of the West and the process of westernization are concepts descriptive of the change in the East due to the influence of the West. Globalisation is the new form of this relation to the West.

### Theory of the Leisure Class

Thorstein Veblen was one of the earliest sociologists to write specifically on consumption. In his theory of leisure class, Veblen (1899(1902)), looks at consumption at the basic level of possession of wealth. Consumption is an evidence of wealth, the "material proof of being rich". It is an objective, material projection; almost a substantiation of one's status position which, in turn is, a subjective phenomenon. Consumption is not about one's accumulated wealth or deep pockets; consumption's primary significance is in being a part of the social world. Consumption is not just possession of wealth, but also the proof of it as visible in the goods/things/activities, to make obvious this wealth and demonstrate that one has it. This gets accomplished in two ways - one through conspicuous leisure and, second through conspicuous consumption.

In the early phase of the industrial society, it was conspicuous leisure-doing nothing or unproductive labor-which was the hallmark of a leisure class. This class prided itself in not doing anything intrinsically useful. In this leisure class, lifestyle antedates even a monetary economy and goes as far back as the most primitive societies ("predatory societies," in Veblen's words). As modern industrial societies started to

come up, they provided new avenues of expenditure of one's wealth. There is money to be spent, but only the process had changed. Instead of spending on an entourage of servants, one is spending on the goods available in the market. In Veblen's words, "Unproductive consumption of goods is honorable, primarily as a mark of prowess and a privilege of human dignity; secondarily it becomes substantially honorable in itself, especially the consumption of the more desirable things (1902:75)". The rest of society aspired to and imitated the upper class standards. Thus, leisure as a way of attaining honor is replaced by consumption of goods, which becomes the principal way of display of wealth. Consumption becomes more important than leisure since it is easier in large societies of strangers to consume and display one's pecuniary standing. Consumption through expenditure of superfluities, through wasteful expenditure, is a way of gaining in status position. In order to be noticed, expenditure must be wasteful. "The consumption of luxuries, in the true sense, is a consumption directed to the comfort of the consumer himself, and is therefore a marker of the master (p.75)". Hence, the failure to consume the right things at the right time, the failure to be part of it all becomes a mark of inferiority and disadvantage. "No merit would accrue from the consumption of bare necessities of life, except by comparison with the abjectly poor that fall short even of the subsistence minimum (p.75)".

For Veblen, consumption is about display of wealth for a positive feedback of prestige. It is about people presenting themselves for other's scrutiny and approval. Another way of saying this is to say that we work on the image-building process, because other's opinion matters to us. In Veblen's times, manufacturing was restricted and was catered to the elite and the leisure class. In addition, the commoner was probably working to make ends meet without any disposable income that is common

now. The leisure class today has inflated in numbers since and has moved the process of consumption to a different level altogether

### Consumption and Cultural Capital

Pierre Bourdieu's seminal work *Distinction* (1984) has as its central notion the class structure that, according to him, is the basis for the perception of all social worlds. Consumption- a process of decoding culture-is also class-based. Each class has its own processes, avenues, and ways of decoding and understanding culture. For Bourdieu, the process of decoding culture is also one's perception of the social world. Consumption is a practice and a part of the everyday world. An interesting concept defined by Bourdieu is that of 'habitus' (1984:101), "where habitus is the internalized form of class conditions and the conditionings it entails". It is what decides one's practices in everyday life world.

Consumption, according to Bourdieu (1984:2), "is a stage in the process of communication, an act of deciphering, decoding, and it presupposes the mastery of a cipher or a code. Consumption is the process of decoding culture". Drawing upon this, one can say that consumption is part of everyday activity. For Bourdieu, the purpose of sociology is to define the ways in which "consumers are produced. Consumers or the subjects of culture are produced according to the structural logics of a stratified society(1984:1)". Bourdieu, in this classic study, looks at consumption patterns across classes and says that it is one's class position that determines what one consumes. One's class position enables one kind of decoding or consumption. "The capacity to decode, understand; to see is a function of the knowledge; or concepts or words that are available to name visible things, which are programmes for perception (1984:1)". This capacity is class-oriented. The world of goods provides for an expression of

fundamental differences to be expressed and possibilities for the pursuit of distinction. This 'distinction' between classes – a model of relationship between the socio-economic aspect and the 'lifestyle'-the cultural aspect- is a part of all stratified societies.

For Bourdieu, consumption is class-specific. Someone who lacks the required codes, or the knowledge, is unable to move from a primary level of "ordinary experience" to the secondary level of the signified. They fail to 'fit in' into another class. Such an encounter remains superficial. The things one does as being part of a class- one's nature- brings in benefits and proceeds in terms of meeting like-minded people, in terms of bringing coherence to one's world. Such a code/knowledge that is internalized as culture, functions as cultural capital. In Bourdieu's words "Owing to the fact that, being unequally distributed, cultural capital secures profits of disposition (1984:1)". It works at sustaining the inequalities in a class society.

Cultural capital is what one acquires through expending time and money on things like education, hobbies etc. So the longer one has spent time and money on education the greater the cultural capital. So different social groups live in different worlds of combinations of cultural practices that continually create a particular sense of reality through combinations of things to consume and ways of consuming them. Therefore, one's world is dominated and made real by the newspaper one reads, the music one listens to, and a store one visits etc. One is able to locate another person in particular social space by knowing these aspects of habits. The preferences of a class constitute coherent systems or habitus. So consumption really communicates social meaning and is the site of struggles over social distinction.

An interesting concept defined by Bourdieu is that of an "eye". "The 'eye' is a product of history reproduced by education. This 'pure gaze' is a historical invention linked to the emergence of a field capable of imposing its own norms on both the

production and the consumption of its products (1984:3)". The 'eye' is the educated intellectual, the trained musician, the connoisseur of tastes. The intellectuals govern the 'field' and they are governed by it. Distinction is a product of the intelligentsia whose effect is to reproduce the symbolic and material interests of the dominant class.

A structural notion of consumption is given by Aglietta for whom consumption is about the "conservation of abilities and attitudes. It is about the exercise of real abilities that are not necessarily intrinsic to the individual but inherent in the place occupied in social relations i.e. the role required by society" (Aglietta, 1987:157). These attitudes are to do with lived experiences, the rudiments of everyday life. Aglietta says that social relations are a consequence of social stratification, which require reproduction, and underlie the process of consumption. These status relations are played out in everyday life patterns. "The concept of status is not merely needed to interpret social differentiations in consumption; it is equally necessary to understand their renewal over time, and conditions of their stability or distortion which make it possible to speak scientifically of a social process of consumption, or even a mode of consumption" (157). Something that Aglietta mentions as a concept worthy of research is quite readily available in Bourdieu's work.

Consumption is expressed in habits, which stabilize the "maintenance cycle of labor-power into a routine (Aglietta, 1987:157)". This in turn brings some kind of equilibrium into the society when transmitted from generation to generation. For Aglietta, "new individuals thus enter the labor market seeking positions with a status whose ideological features they have already internalized". Consumption is in the field of the 'habitus'- the internalized form of class condition and the conditioning it entails- which mediates the relationship between the social reproduction and the practices of the agents. In traditional societies, it is kinship and the community at large that mediates the

relationship between reproduction and practice, whereas in modern societies, it is capital that mediates the relationship. In both forms of society, mediation is rooted in the habitus. Distinction describes capital, as the mediating form, as resting on the distribution and possession of material assets – fundamentally on economic capital.

### Goods and Generation of Needs

According to Baudrillard (1998), consumption stabilizes capitalism. In Baudrillard's words "needs are produced as elements of a system and not as a relation between an individual and an object... needs and consumption are in fact an organized extension of productive forces(1998:75-76)". His suggestion is that we consume an object not for its own concrete nature but purchase the ideas behind the objects for social ends. We are in the realm of ideas and signs here; social differentiation of the objects through signs is the key issue. The purpose of the objects is to communicate. Baudrillard sees consumption as another logical step in the development of capitalism. So not only do you serve the system by producing, you also serve it by consuming; consumption is essentially communication of signs and social differentiation. Objects and material goods- things- are not the object of consumption. They are not the purpose of consumption; they are the object of needs and the satisfaction of needs.

People have always bought, possessed, enjoyed, and spent "things" but this is not consumption, as we know today. The primitive festivals, the largesse of the feudal lords (luxury goods in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) - none of this is consumption according to Baudrillard. The things in the stores, the luxury goods in the malls are consumption. Baudrillard's main idea is that all consumption is symbolic. Traditional symbolic objects were the mediators of a real relationship, or a directly experienced situation. They were not arbitrary. They were symbolic but were living objects because of their

inward orientation with respect to human actions. Such objects are not consumed. To become an object of consumption, an object must first become a sign. It must become external to a relationship that it now signifies. It can be consumed in relation to other objects that exist alongside it. It becomes “personalized” through all other sign-objects that give it a meaning derived out of a difference, not for its practical use value. The apparatus of advertising suggests that the rational order of production must go on and must not be disturbed. The contradiction must not disturb the order of production. In order to be part of the system of production, for the system to go on, it should be ‘personalized’. It should be connected to the people; related to the people i.e. sugarcoated.

Neither the volume of the goods nor the satisfaction of needs define the notion of consumption. For him these are the preconditions of consumption. Consumption is not a material practice or the “phenomenology of affluence”. Consumption binds all these objects and messages into a signifying fabric: “consumption is the virtual totality of objects and messages in a coherent discourse. It is a systematic manipulation of signs. Appearing to be two opposing viewpoints, they converge on the plane of consumption as a critique of capitalist accumulation”. Baudrillard talks of consumption as the ethic of capitalism and how it works at the level of ideology. For him, consumption keeps the wheels of commerce moving.

### Consumption as Dépense

For Bataille (1988), surplus of any kind or accumulation has always had an existence even in the primitive societies. Bataille explains it in terms of the extra energy of the system. Anything that does not further in the growth of the system directly is the extra energy: the surplus. Whatever is enough for the growth of the system in general is

the required amount; the rest is in excess. The excess needs to be used up and/or squandered. In economic terms, this happens through consumption. The choice of expenditure of this energy is always through extravagance, through consumption. In this sense Bataille's notion of consumption as something transgressive, i.e. something almost unlawful, makes sense of the extreme irrationality behind such a phenomenon. In the same vein frugality/austerity are important because one is always anticipating the expenses in the future. There is no denying that consumption involves the satisfaction of needs (eating, drinking, using up) and rational use of tools. This universalistic definition naturalizes the dynamics of consumption into an abstract principle, which is not too different from the definition of matter/energy transformation offered by physics. There is a duality inherent in the etymology- to use up entirely involving destruction of matter and to sum up (consumer), to carry to completion. This duality is un-enabling in the sense of being restrictive.

The argument about consumer society relates to the creation of desire that surpasses the necessary, to the limitlessness of the desire, and to the endless longing for something new. Consumption then is about using up; it is also about creation or production. Therefore, there is 'eating up' or consuming and 'producing', construction or production. There is destruction and production at the same time. Societies simultaneously accommodate both. Bataille's concept of "waste" or "expenditure," says consumption is about certain cultural practices of sacrifice, feasting, or festival rituals. These and other ritual ways of expenditure Bataille calls 'dépense', where the excessive part is wasted or destroyed as in the potlatch ritual of American tribe of Kwakiutl. For Bataille, the utilitarian aspect of a need is to do with production per se; consumption on the other hand is about the luxuries and is beyond the utilitarian and practical. Consumption is about the extra energy or the surplus, which is the basis for the many

problems of the human race in the present times. For him it is the excess amount after production, the surplus that is the focus of the problem. The surplus or the profit that is accumulated in the process of capitalist production, which is the focus of Bataille's ideas. At a micro level of families and households, it is the disposable income and the needs created by the culture industry, which is the focus of the present study. The excess amount that does not further the progress of the system directly –the surplus is the problem. The excess, which needs to be dissipated, in economic terms is consumption. This expenditure is always through lavishness or 'extravagance', through consumption. In ancient societies, the greatest form of excess was expelled through festivals and sacrificial rituals.

Surplus cannot be defined according to the productivistic mode, which implies a distinction between the necessary and the superfluous. The 'dépense' (expenditure) follows a principle other than that of 'economic scarcity'. The general economy is an economy of loss, imbalance, and expenditure without profit. It cannot be analyzed in terms of the restricted economy of production, equilibrium, and balanced books: the economy of classical utility. All forms of excess -which by definition do not have an equivalent –fall within the general economy. Excess and loss have no obvious function in social life; they stand for necessarily dysfunctional, heterogeneous elements.

Bataille's generalization is an insightful critique of the 'productivist' economic thought. In Bataille's view, an economic system based on the principle of production of commodities by means of commodities is the economic principle of consumption. It is a specific cultural formation with a form of doing away with the 'cursed' part or the one that is meant for throwing away and getting rid of. For Bataille, the surplus is the 'cursed' part of a system. The telos of the system is to produce excess without limits. The critique of 'productivist' economic thought is that historically it is a mode of

'dépense' or expenditure. Therefore, expenditure is at the center of an economy rather than only production. "... it is not necessity but its contrary, "luxury", that presents living matter and mankind with their fundamental problems (1988:12)".

For Bataille, the waste of the potlatch is similar to the construction of 'useless' monuments- a phase in the over determining process of destructive waste. This is manifest in the festivals, potlatch rituals as well as the 'consumption of warfare', sacrificing human lives. What we now call culture, as a separate field from the functional fields of economy and politics is really the history of the principle of 'dépense', responsible for the 'constructive' dimension manifest in the material form. Manifest both constructively and destructively, (rituals or performances e.g. fireworks) 'cultural production' is much older than the economic distinction between production and consumption. 'Warfare' is modern form of potlatch says Caillous (Falk1995:43n) giving an interpretation for modern societies. He says war has replaced festival as the dominant form of 'dépense'. Consumption in the six weeks of the (first) Gulf War in material terms is a world record of potlatch so far. Merely 'using up' of war consumption goods of the US army --a fraction of all material costs- amounted to a staggering \$15,000,000,000 per week.

Both human sacrifice of the past and war in the present, is a way of introducing disequilibrium into a society dominated by extreme rationality and utilitarian exchange values.

### The Production of Desire

Jean-Joseph Goux (1990) takes up a psychological and symbolic approach. Goux says that it is 'desire' that is the driving force of the economy. According to Goux, the three factors of production -- capital, labour, and land -- get balanced by the

principle of desire (Goux, 1990:199). Goux stresses on the production of desire. For him, the basis of economic value lies in the intensity of desiring, and the production of value is not through mere satisfaction of needs. The production of value is through the production of desire. Economies work on the production of value and, for Goux, the production of desire produces economic value and not the gratification of needs.

The consumer society is a society of “abundance and of scarcity. It must both produce plenty and paucity, repletion and appetite, satisfaction and desire” (Goux, 1990:201). This incongruous combination constitutes a symbolic thirst. This is what constitutes the basis for desire in its varied forms. Therefore, one is always demanding more and the possibilities always seem endless. The market economy of consumption has as its base not the demand for need satisfaction -a non-elastic demand but production of desire.

It presupposes ... a market for the unnecessary and the superfluous characterized by the finite elasticity of demand, as the economists would have it: demand is all the more elastic when it concerns a “need,” an appetite, or a thirst, that is not essential for survival- a substitute object (Goux, 1990:201).

The thirst (as metaphorised) transforms the objects of consumption and the objects of desire into “a chain of substitutes, substituting one for the other, offering alternative objects for the fundamentally objectless desire to be fixed upon”. The substitutive character of goods is apparent in the artificial character of the needs that they are supposed to satisfy. The needs are not basic needs for survival; one can do without them. It is the system of production of desire- the entertainment industry or the whole culture industry- enables the production and satisfaction of desire. The system enables and sustains the process of gratification and completes the circle with a purchase.

The consumer society is constituted on the consumption of the exceeding part, the accursed share (Bataille) which is generalized to the whole world of goods. In other

words, we are consuming supplements in the double sense -as additions and as substitutes. Consumer society is a “supplement generator, an apparatus simulator,” producing addition and subtraction, “surfeit and deficit,” both superficiality and lack (Goux, 1990:201).

### The Gift Economy and the Social Life of Commodities

Instead of the accumulation of wealth for accumulating (for further growth) that is characteristic of capitalist societies, ‘societies of the gift’, according to Mauss (1990), are characterized by expenditure- giving- and the gaining of prestige. In this context, a thing is more than what it is simply by being a part of the process of exchange. Value is added to it only when it is part of an exchange system. The essence of the potlatch is to give. Prestige and honor are gained and maintained by the one who can expend to the greatest possible extent, thus placing the receiver under an obligation to match the prodigality of the giver (Mauss, 1990:39). Gifts are part of our society where weddings, birthdays, rite de passage ceremonies all entail a great deal of gift giving. It is considered unthinkable to go to a party ‘empty handed’. Mauss is central to consumption not so much for his notion of the gift but for his concept of the collective solidarity as a social fact. For him, it is not “individuals but collectivities that impose obligations of exchange and contract upon each other” (Mauss, 1990:5).

Elaborating on Durkheim, this notable work on the value of the gift was done by Mauss while researching in the Trobriand Islands. According to Mauss, a gift that does nothing to enhance solidarity is a contradiction. In the purpose of giving and receiving, goods become a part of an exchange network, signifying social bonds and moral obligations. The purpose of giving is to enhance solidarity, the feeling of

goodwill between people and groups. If no such purpose is served, then the act of giving is futile, pointless- a contradiction. The system of potlatch among the North American tribe of Kwakiutl is an extreme case of rivalry, expressed by the rule always to give more than what is received: failure to return a gift means falling in honor in the society. The Gift was a system of exchange explaining the whole credit system of an economy (Mauss, 1990:x). Thus, gift giving as markers of consumption in various societies is not a product of simple exchange of goods but a complex calculation built on shared understandings of techniques of giving and receiving. A gift is an object but it is more than that. It is part of the relationship in which it is given. It has meaning for the giver and the receiver. A comparison may be drawn here to the system of gift giving where a ritualistic list is maintained during a party as to who has given what to make sure a return of an equal or greater value. Failure to do so would result in lowering of prestige or an imbalance in a relationship.

A material commodity has to be reified into its sign. It is consumption, which brings a commodity into the realm of exchange, and it requires the reification of the commodity. However, for Marx, only the excess after consumption produces commodities. Otherwise, production is aimed at only creating use values. However, the point is that every product of labour even before it enters the flow of consumption has a symbolic character. The process of production presupposes the idea of the product. The realm of design and structure itself is symbolic and representational. It is not in the realm of consumption but in the pre-production stage that the symbolic nature of a product is decided and is marketed.

Goods, according to Douglas and Isherwood (1979/1996), can be regarded from the point of view either of their function or of their meaning. If one looks at just the meaning of goods, "then goods are needed for making visible and stable the

categories of culture. It is standard practice to assume that all material possessions carry social meanings... goods are communicators of social meaning (38)". As communicators, goods serve to mark and classify social relationships.

Through the public meanings attached to goods and public uses, consumption organizes social order by making visible social divisions, ranks and so on. Social meaning is generally shifting and unstable; consumption rituals as conventions of use tie these meanings down and set up visible public definitions (Slater, 1997:150).

Goods also have functions in terms of depicting positive and negative qualities. They can be used as "bridges or fences (Douglas and Isherwood, 1996: xiv)". Goods not only show what is relevant in a particular culture but they stabilize these categories in various ways. Different classes have at their disposal different goods to make and maintain their own classed sense of the world. Therefore, for Douglas and Isherwood consumption is cultural and helps elucidate the meaning of the world to the people. "Through the use of goods we can construct and maintain an intelligible social universe, since by classifying, comparing, ordering the things we have and use we make sense of and organize our social relations, classifying persons and events" (Slater, 1997:151). According to Slater, consumption for Douglas and Isherwood is 'integrative'.

Consumption as a meaningful flow of information integrates people into an intelligible universe. Knowledge of meanings and codes creates a social universe, which is shared by the community, and this shared system forms part of everyday life. An interesting problem elucidated by Douglas and Isherwood is to understand "what is the direction and power that selects... (makes for a) shift in status, so that from being first unknown, then known but dispensable, some goods become indispensable? (1996:69)

Commodities, according to Appadurai (1986:3), like persons have 'social lives'. In order to understand their uses and import, one needs to look at the meanings imbued

in their forms. The paths of the commodities are to be traced and understood in order to understand their social lives. It is the “biography” of a particular thing that gives it the rich individuality within a specific space and time. (Kopytoff in Appadurai 1986:64-91).

Burke (1996:5) in one of the seminal works about consumption in the third world says that the spread of commodities in the southern African country of Zimbabwe preceded the capitalist expansion of the nation states via development. In Burke’s analysis, the process of formation of needs was typical of communities in the early colonial period in Africa. It was deeply rooted in the pre-colonial valuation of the “foreign” as well as in the local production of commodities, caused in part by the articulation of the colonial labour market with the local modes of production.

#### Globalisation: The World Space for Capital

the need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeois over the surface of the globe. It must ...settle everywhere, and establish connexions everywhere. The bourgeois has ... given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country... It has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood ... that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of old wants, satisfied by the products of that country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes...The bourgeois...draws all nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down Chinese walls...it compels all nations to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image (Marx, Cited in Elster: 1986:227).

This useful passage from *The Communist Manifesto* sums up a whole lot of issues subsumed under the umbrella of what is being referred to as globalization today. Marx’s opinion obviously has an economic slant where questions of culture are nowhere in sight. Thus, as a concept of economic restructuring, globalization has many

connotations. However, the focus of changes that are crucial can be traced to economic and political developments in the late 1980s or early 1990s. These events include the end of the cold war, dismantling of state socialism in the USSR and the tearing down of the Berlin Wall.

Robertson (1992:51) says that globalization is a “conceptual entry point into the problems of ‘world order’”. “It is best understood as indicating the form in terms of which the world becomes ‘united’ (not in a naïve functional sense of integration). For reasons of politico-economic and social conveniences various fora are formed which bring together diversity or do not”. The IMF, for example, is an international forum but clearly has the developed countries as the decision makers in order to maintain the world order that Robertson is talking about. The world in objective terms was compressed and subjectively the peoples of the globe came closer to each other as if inhabiting a single space. “Globalisation as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole. Globalisation- the term itself has become part of the global consciousness.(Robertson, 1992:8)”

For Robertson (1989a:57), “national societies or the unitary nation-state should be regarded as constituting but one general reference point for the analysis of the global-human circumstance”. The formation of nations after independence from colonial powers with the principles of democracy was a prerequisite for the global condition. India had to undergo ‘development’ in order to open up its doors for . Globalization would be still in the making if the nation states were yet to evolve.

In dealing with an analysis of globalization, one is confronted with a variety of perspectives each with a firm grounding in a discipline. Right from history, to geography, economics, political science and sociology, each has a firm basis for the

theories put across. Sociologically, however, globalization is about the multiplication of “social densities” (Pieterse 1995:48) across the world and the emergence of a “world society”. Globalization is cosmopolitanism in a pigeonhole, describing social change, which is happening around the whole world with the West producing the process. This process implies that the world is becoming “uniform and standardized, through a technological, commercial, and cultural synchronization emanating from the West and the global is tied up with modernity”. For Pieterse, globalization is a phase is an existing condition...as against a mere type of modernity, it gives a historical depth to world history. It is multidimensional in nature and is at work in varying degrees in different parts of the world.

Modernity and globalization make up a readymade package, a set of processes at work in the world, giving structure and periodization to the world since the 1500s. Social densities are to be corroborated with social diversities wherein lies the aspect of “hybridity” as instanced in Pieterse’s notion of globalization. For Pieterse, globalization is a kind of hybridization where the latter is defined as the “ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices. Also the present phase of globalization is a weakening of the nation-states – as in the weakening of the national economy in the context of ‘economic globalism’ and culturally the decline of patriotism”. Pieterse’s notion encompasses the objective presence of differences, which are obvious, and out there –differences in race, nationalities, religions, which are at work throughout the world. Whether it is rap music imported from the US sung by a British of Indian origin immigrated from Ghana or a Ethiopian student studying international relations in a Third World university; a clear presence of difference is obvious. Thus, such processes can set into motion forces of disintegration and unification.

Globalization can bring about understanding of political difference as well as of common identity; can accelerate international communication can increase in the available “modes of organization: transnational, international, regional, municipal, and local”. Pieterse’s suggestion is to look at these phenomena in the light of integrative concepts like hybridization. “Hybridization is ...the emergence of new practices of social co-operation and competition, cultural expressions (where) new forms of cooperation require and evoke new cultural imaginaries. Hybridization is a contribution to sociology of the in-between, endogenous/exogenous understandings of culture (p.53)”. The boundaries of nation, community, ethnicity, or class are broken and hybridity provides the solution to problems of ethnicity like religious fundamentalisms.

But for Ella Shohat, a functionalist approach like Pieterse’s ignores the issue of imperialism and flattens it by giving it an all-positive character. Hybridization may be seen as a sign of turning this social confusion into a virtue by those dealing with problems of social change. As Shohat puts it: “A celebration of syncretism and hybrid per se, if not articulated in conjunction with questions of hegemony and neo-colonial power relations runs into the risk of appearing to sanctify the *fait accompli* of colonial violence” (cited in Lash et al 1995:109).

For Jameson (2000), globalization discourse is concerned more with the effects of the process rather than the process itself. He explores five distinct levels of globalization, “with a view to demonstrate their ultimate cohesion and to articulating a politics of resistance: the technological, the political, the cultural, the economic, the social (p.49)” in that order. Technological globalization is in terms of the new communication technologies and the information revolution and their impact on industrial production, marketing, and organization. At the political level, globalization is about the weakening of the nation state and the dominance of the new world order or the

US. In the cultural realm, globalization is again about the cultural domination of the West over the rest of the world. For Jameson, all the above varieties of globalization collapse into the cultural and the cultural dissolves into the economic. Both implicate each other in the process. The cultural implicates the economic in the example of the entertainment industry where Hollywood films and US television serials have been the most profitable exports of the United States along with weapons and food to the rest of the world. Here the cultural is the economic and sets a political agenda of policy.

Controlling the new technologies, reinforcing geopolitical interests...collapsing the cultural into the economic and the economic into the cultural. Commodity production is now a cultural phenomenon, in which you buy the product fully as much for its image as for its immediate use. An entire industry has come into being to design commodities' images and to strategize their sale: advertising has become a fundamental mediation between culture and economics, and it is surely to be numbered among the myriad forms of aesthetic production. (Jameson 2000:53)

Citing John Gray's *False Dawn* (1998), Jameson (p.61) says that the economic growth labeled globalization does not necessarily 'inaugurate a universal civilization'. It is not the flattening of the globe in cultural terms but rather the development of capitalism in its indigenous forms different from the 'ideal free market'. In Gray's words, "It creates regimes that achieve modernity by renewing their own cultural traditions, not by imitating western countries. There are many modernities, and as many ways of failing to be modern". Therefore, globalization is also about invoking the traditional in service of capitalist accumulation.

Jameson says that resistance to globalization in terms of patent protection laws, disputes over tariffs, and other kinds of trade issues and in the resistance of the national cultural, which are against the global free-market, "against an American 'universalism' that would sweep away local culture along with the whatever welfare safety-net and

socialized medical systems might still be in place”- have to be necessarily in the ‘nationalist’ spirit. “Here, the defense of the national suddenly becomes the defense of the welfare state itself”.

Another dimension of cultural globalization is that of ‘culture of consumption’. This describes a specific “mode of life generated by late capitalist commodity production,” (p.57) that might signal the end of all that is social by corroding traditional social groups and atomizing society. It threatens to subsume alternative forms of everyday behavior where families, clans and such traditional groups considered important are threatened to disintegrate.

According to Deshpande (2003:151), “globalisation is the label of the present times that we live in”. It is the ‘yuga’-the global village- of our times. For Aijaz Ahmed (2002:95), globalization is the latest phase in the history of imperialism and central to this process is the movement of capital across the globe. For him, globalisation is the phase of advanced capitalism, where capital needs to find its ground in the cultural rather than the political-economic. The process of accumulation is possible only via the circuit of cultural production. In that sense, the various avenues of production are based in the cultural realm.

## 2. India: The Move to Consumption

images weave together the symbolic fabric of a hegemonic political culture in a liberalizing India. And that the imagined form of the global is itself produced through cultural signs and symbols that rest on the deployment of the nationalist narratives (Fernandes, 2000:612).

The metros are emerging and their development is less due to traditional sources of wealth like land or industry but on education and professional/technical skills. Aspirations are whetted by the exposure to better lifestyles; the consuming class begins to replicate the culture of the west, what would then set apart people will be what they buy rather than where they came from (The Week, 2001:14).

For understanding globalization and consumption, the entry point into the liberalized world of India is Hyderabad. Hyderabad is the capital city of the state of Andhra Pradesh, which is the fourth most populous state in India. It is one of the fastest growing cities with an annual growth rate of 5.34 per cent in the years 1989-1991 and is the sixth largest cities in India with a population of 55.3 lakhs (5.53 million) (MCH Records 2003:27). Hyderabad as a city is about eight times bigger than the next city- Warangal, in the region.

Cities like Hyderabad are characterized by “sharp gradients of their areas of influence giving them an enclave character...so that one sometimes moves from the world of the most advanced metallurgy to the realm of shifting agriculture, traversing four millennia in 15 miles”. (Rao and Dev, 2003:583) In terms of infrastructure development, however, there has been a decline in the 1990s in terms of water supply, garbage clearance, and length of roadways in the area. There has been selective development in the sense that the areas, which receive the focus of global capital- the IT Park, the area designated as the information city- Cyberabad, entertainment areas, and

shopping malls, have received attention in terms of better water supply, better roads, better management of the overall aesthetic appearance.

The growth of urban cities has gone up consistently over the years and this has gone hand in hand with the process of underdevelopment in the vast rural hinterland. The rural areas lacked any potential to sustain the out-migration of the people to the urban cities. The character of such migration is unidirectional and consists of the rural poor -in search of livelihood and the rich- in search of better opportunities. The distribution of the urban population by size class of urban centers in India has gone up from a mere nine in number to 35 in the 'million plus' category of cities since 1971 up till 2001. So, one-third of the total urban population of 285 million in 2001 was concentrated in 35 cities (Rao and Dev, 2003:577).

The state witnessed a "top-heavy" growth of urbanization and Hyderabad's pre-eminence has been reinforced over time as the highly urbanized region amidst the rest. Hyderabad has the highest growth rate of 56.32 per cent in 1991-2001 and of 209.2 per cent in the years 1981-1991. This compared to the data on just Hyderabad (19.2 per cent in 1991-2001 and 37.4 per cent in 1981-1991) has interesting implications. The city of Hyderabad constitutes 10 municipalities and apart from these 10, the suburban space around Hyderabad is the Rangareddy District. This area is the space of growth in terms of the IT offices, the Hi-Tech city, and the corresponding residential areas.

The suburban area around Hyderabad has witnessed a population growth rate of 155 per cent indicating that the growth is occurring outside Hyderabad city (MCH, 2003:25). In terms of economic indicators of development, the gross district domestic product to the gross domestic product of the state is about 15 per cent. The next contributor is Visakapatnam, a port city that has a contribution of about six per cent to the gross domestic product of the state. The contribution of the city to the state

economy, in terms of the share of the city to the total sales tax revenue of the state is about 60 per cent. Likewise, the sales revenue from Visakapatnam is about six per cent. The excise revenue collection is 75 per cent from the district of Hyderabad.

Economic analysis studies have used as one of its indicators, the volume of bank credit to assess level of economic development. This though is only a proxy to real indicators. About 80 per cent of the credit from the financial institutions goes to Hyderabad district. The other side of the coin is the underdevelopment of the peripheral areas of the rich pockets of growth. There is a ten-fold increase in the slum population in the city since 1960s. The new areas of development have fewer slums indicating another pattern of avoidance of such pockets from coming up but about 19.41 per cent of the population reside in the slums.

The process of globalization started with the TDP (Telugu Desam Party) - a regional party at the state level. This party put Hyderabad on the world map as the software centre in India. The jobs started for software professionals who were sent to the US to work as programmers do what is called “body shopping” work. This made the companies like Infosys, Satyam, and Wipro, the software giants of India, one of the fastest growing companies. As trade practices changed, the focus of work shifted from USA to India. Technology made it possible for the work to be done at far cheaper rates and without the physical movement of the programmers. What has come to be termed ‘outsourcing,’ the IT work for US companies is sourced out of the country from US to India and other countries, and IT requirements are met in India. The professionals who are employed are benefiting from better pay and profits. In this context of economic changes, the global capital has penetrated the market and the households. Some of the call centre jobs that are a part of the customer support services of some US companies are based in Hyderabad. For them, the knowledge of English as the sole basis for a job,

has created a new class of youth who have not only learned the American English for customer support requirements, but have easily westernized in a major way.

The global capital is seen not only in the increased income levels but also in the new shopping areas and cafes, which are frequented by the youth and others alike. Consumption in that sense has new meaning. The media gives it a new meaning where desires are pushed to levels without limits.

Consumption as a symbolic process of the 'work of the imagination' (Appadurai, 1997:5) has always been a part of the material culture. If consumption is expenditure in its most basic form, then expenditure on marriages, house construction, saving for children's education, has always been a part of the culture of consumption in all societies. However, in the stages before globalisation, with development as the national ideology propagated by the hegemonic bloc -the middle class, consumption was on a very different terrain. Consumption moved within the structural limits of development, always zeroing in on frugality and was always within the rational limits of what is required i.e. the most basic needs. Consumption moved within the structural constraints of socialist principles of economic policy where the market offered products for consumption. It did not offer the choices it does now. The near obsessive aspect of consumption in India like dowry, firecrackers, wedding expenses, which cut through class barriers, has to be examined at the level of each household. Surplus of the system is here the surplus of the household. It is the extra energy of the household, which gets dissipated. Indian society has always been driven by a certain level of consumption, which takes care of the surplus all the time. In that sense, with the advent of liberalization, it is accumulation of capital in the middle class household, which is a new phenomenon. Rather than surplus, it is accumulation that is the new 'base' for consumption levels in this phase.

The data on consumption contains interesting viewpoints as different as chalk and cheese. If according to Douglas and Isherwood (1979/1991), consumption is a marker of one's level of living; an indicator of poverty levels (for their research purposes); then the consumption data for the urban middle class in India is an indicator of its rise to affluence. It is an indicator of the middle class becoming a consumer in a total sense of the term. The shift in economic policies of the government, new liberal policies with their special focus on consumption offered new identities to consumers and new choices. The market research agencies and the NSSO offer data for the past 50 odd years with diverse viewpoints. NSSO has been at the forefront of sociological research work since 1950 and have accumulated data on consumption habits and level, to poverty estimation, employment and unemployment rates etc. These have to be read in the light of the welfare policy requirements made for the development of the economy and the underdeveloped areas and sections of the populace. The studies were a part of the government's welfare policies in the developmentalist agenda of the Constitution. One need to ask the question: what did these figures and rates do rather than what they meant. What did such studies accomplish? The studies on the surface were motivated by welfare policies, but later, the same were put into use as market research data by Joshi (1996), NCAER- Rao(1993), and BBDO (1998). The purpose of these studies was to encapsulate India for the investors as an emerging market.

The development of the economic forces of globalization and liberalization, required the state to deliver new data. The data by Joshi (1996:1-12), is a compilation of the last 25 years of NSSO data into a concise form for easy access and 'consumption' by the investors. This data reflects the focus on how the urban and the rural middle class consumption levels have gone up considerably. The market research data - NCAER data (Rao, S. L: 1993), and The Week survey (2001), and RK Swamy /BBDO group (1998)

reflects the same trend with the focus as the middle class. The recent data by the market research agencies reflects the growth of the consumption patterns of the middle class and how this has changed considerably through the years.

### **The Move to Consumption**

Consumption in this context is geared toward production, which was a part of the process of building a nation, an economy. The logic of capital in the pre-globalization phase is production and the consumption data are a by-product of the policy initiatives to serve capital investments. With the turn to liberalization, consumption data are generated for serving capital accumulation, with a focus on further consumption. Capital has moved from of the arena of production into the cultural sphere. The developmentalist policies were geared towards laying of infrastructure, making of dams, steel plants, and roads. In the economic policy changes of the government from welfare policies, social reform, to a liberalized economy, one can read the move to consumption from production. The data that are considered are from the following sources: the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), NCAER (National Council for Applied Economic Research) the Statistical Abstracts of the government of Andhra Pradesh (AP) and the popular media and research agencies.

These data are the ‘text’ in which one can read the shift of focus from production to consumption. Deleuze (Buchanan 2000:23) says that the “book of ink” is any ‘text’ that has a story to tell. It could be a movie, a photograph, a policy measure, a folk narrative or a datum. He says that the missing element in the book of ink is the context, the background or the thing left unsaid. That which is missing is the “book of soul” which is to be written in silence and blood. The book of ink in this context- the NSS and NCAER data, the AP government abstracts- hides the realities of the post

independence efforts at nation building. Quantitative data give a picture of progress but hide institutional realities like corruption, irrelevance, and inadequacy of policy initiatives, ignorance of inequalities based on caste, class, and region not only in policy formulation but also in execution. The national elite in the domain of politics and bureaucracy, the institutions of power, adhered to the rational norms of the 'policies' and the 'five year plans.'

### National Sample Survey Organization

The NSS is the most reliable source providing time series information of consumption expenditure and distribution of household/population by monthly per capita total consumption. Consumption, as studied by the National Sample Survey deals primarily with the "consumer expenditure" at the level of households and at the individual- per capita level. NSS has been carrying out consumption expenditure surveys since 1950 every year up until 1974 and since then it is being collected every five years.

The percentage distribution of MPCE (monthly per capita consumer expenditure) on food and non-food consumption items, as shown in table 1, shows that, it has gone up in various NSS rounds. This again indicates that the expenses in general have gone up and there has been a steep rise after 1990s and the effects of an increased income level starts showing then.

*Table 1. Percentage distribution of MPCE by food and non-food consumption items in various NSS rounds*

	1972-73	1977-83	1983-83	1987-88	1993-94	1999-00
NSS round number	27 <sup>th</sup>	32 <sup>nd</sup>	38 <sup>th</sup>	43 <sup>rd</sup>	50 <sup>th</sup>	55 <sup>th</sup>
Food Expenditure (per cent to MPCE)	64.5	60.0	59.1	56.4	54.2	48.1
Non-food Expenditure (per cent to MPCE)	35.5	40.0	40.9	43.6	45.3	51.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
MPCE in rupees	63	96	166	250	458	855
Increase in Number of times over 27 <sup>th</sup> round	1	1.5	2.6	4.0	7.3	13.6

Source: *Sarvekshana: Journal of NSSO Vol.24 no.4 April 2001- September 2001 (p.18)*

The data collected is around the following lines: at the level and pattern of consumption; consumption of clothing, footwear, and durable goods; proportions of households benefiting from poverty alleviation programmes. The household consumption expenditure is expenditure incurred by a household on domestic consumption during the particular reference period. This conceptual tool to measure consumption was utilized throughout the survey process with hardly any major changes over the 20-year period until 1974. The household consumption expenditure is the total value of consumption of various groups of items, namely, food, betel leaf, tobacco, intoxicants, light and fuel; clothing and footwear; miscellaneous goods and services; durable goods.

Different items come under different dimensions of consumption. The first two are derived out of aggregating the monetary value of goods consumed during the reference period. The third was considered consumed if it was brought into first use

during the reference period. Consumption of these may be out of different monetary expenditures like an actual purchase, homegrown stock, receipts against exchange of goods and services, a gift, or charity, borrowing, free collection.

This concept of consumption according to the NSSO implies a purchase made for household consumption meant for the running of a household. This is at the most basic level with no reference to a 'culture of consumption' as one would encounter in the present day societies the world over. The cultural basis of consumption has always been there; it is the extent and exponential rise in the capital-intensive consumption patterns, which is the focus. The cultural and the symbolic notion of consumption today is the focus of all kinds of capital. It is the extent to which the market and the polity are involved in order to make the culture of consumption the pivot of the capitalist accumulation process.

There is a strong presence of the base, material world in these descriptions implying the importance of consumption as a part of the lifecycle process. Consumption is here a normal consequence to production. It is interesting to note that since the liberalization of the economy there have been various studies of consumption by the government and non-government institutions alike, which focus on the capital. Previously, the government's focus was alleviation of poverty levels and the market focused on the consumption patterns of only the elite in India. Now, with globalization, this new focus of the market and the government is similar in that both have the middle class- the 300 million consumers as its focus.

Joshi (1996:1-12) makes a comparison of the changing patterns of consumption expenditure in some selected states of India in a report made out for the Ministry of Planning and Programme Implementation. His effort is to understand and examine the level of per capita expenditure - an indicator of level of living, and whether it has

improved during the last 20 years. He starts with an attempt to compare the per capita expenditure across time and then within each period. He also examines the same for different expenditure groups. (High, middle and low). The study is confined to analyzing per capita expenditure of selected population groups viz, lower group consisting of the bottom 30 per cent of the population; middle group comprising 30 per cent-70 per cent of the population; the top group with the top 30 per cent of the population. It is addressing the need for welfare policy analysis, where the consumption expenditure is the best indicator for income, a proxy for income levels. Income however, is not necessarily a good indicator of level of living or welfare and reliable data on income distribution is rarely available.

NSSO provides time series information of consumption expenditure and distribution of household/population by monthly per capita total consumption. However, this data of consumption expenditure is not a good measure for understanding levels of living. For example, a migrant labor, without the benefit of a ration card might be forced to buy rice at the retailer instead of the PDS ration shop. As the survey results clearly imply, the poorer sections of the population spends the most on food and the least on non-food items. The middle section and the top section spend the least on food and the most on non-food products and services. In addition, it is important to understand what proportion of an income is spent on what item since the poorer you are the more money you spend to survive and the richer you get the less you spend on survival or basic goods. Thus, an underpaid school teacher working in a slum area, might spend half of her income on the rent for her flat, while a well-to-do family living in an own house will not spend anything at all. In addition, the data gathered is largely about "food"- an object of consumption in the most obvious and total sense.

Consumption thus, is a means of providing oneself with energy, preparing oneself for work or production. Thus, the calculation of cereal consumption is an important measure in this idea of consumption. Cereal is the “most important constituent of an average food basket ...for contributing major share in the intake of calories for healthy physiological existence of a human body” (Joshi: 1996:6). This is not to mean a lack of culture of consumption on ‘goods and ‘things’. Consumption expenditure during festivals, marriages, and important events of rites of passage are not included in these surveys. A major chunk of not just the monthly income, but also one’s life savings goes into these consumption practices. This being the case, consumption expenditure data is of limited scope in the NSS surveys. However, consumption data on unemployment and employment, poverty alleviation, consumption expenditure are part of the government’s effort to “give direction” to social policy measures. The discourse of modernity came with such parameters, which had to be measured to ensure that the development process has had results to measure, namely, ‘progress.’ A structured method to development required a practice manifest in the national sample surveys. The survey data are a text into which the missing context can be read.

This move is visible in another text- *Sarvekshana-Annual Report 2 Changing Patterns of Consumer Expenditure in India and some select states-* by Joshi (1996) which consolidates the data under one head to draw a picture of the economy where the consumer is the focus. Increase in the consumer expenditure patterns is the sharp focus of the text. It is another attempt at giving direction to the market forces, to enable a better understanding of the market for future investors. It is clear that the beginnings of a culture of consumption were being laid out in the various moves by the government and the private institutions like NCAER [*Consumer Market Demographics in India:*

Rao S.L (Ed) (1993)], which sought out the consumer in the middle class. This move is indicative of the shift of capital from production to consumption.

Joshi makes a comparison of different variables of expenditure and consumption across different economic strata and across three distinct periods. The years 1972-1973, 1983, and 1994-1995 are the axial points for a time series analysis.

Some of his findings are as follows:

- The overall rise in MPCE (Monthly Per Capita Expenditure) for the period 72-73 to 93-94 was a little higher than the consumer prices. In real terms, the rise in MPCE works out to about 22.5 per cent for rural areas and 17.32 per cent for the urban areas for the same period.
- In the urban sector, the percentage expenditure on cereals declined from 23.22 to 14.03, for the same time period.
- Milk consumption has gone up considerably from 35 to 45 percent. However, food expenditure has gone down from 64.49 per cent to 54.65 per cent. For cereal consumption, the expenditure has gone down from 36.51 per cent to 25.68 per cent.
- For the same time period (72-73 to 93-94), the share of expenditure for food for the bottom 30 per cent has increased and for the top 30 per cent it has decreased. For the middle class it has almost been static. (Rao 1993:12)

The general relation seems to be that when prices are higher, the distribution of expenditure seems to be equal, and everybody seems to 'spend' or is forced to spend no matter what. "An increase in price tends to increase the share of expenditure of poorer people and makes the distribution of expenditure more equal". Therefore, the poor have little choice about not buying when the prices are high. "Such greater equality in

distribution of expenditure does not mean an improvement in the level of living but may be an indication of lowering of level of living” (Joshi1996:12).

Seen in the light of lowering of levels of living, consumption, as a field of study has been limited. Liberalization and the new market forces have given the process of consumption not just a new meaning but also a new environment. Liberalization and the changes in the economy since the early 1990s i.e. the free market economy constitutes the context for this study.

According to an estimate in the magazine, *The Week*, there will be 450 million people in the middle class in India by year 2010. It goes on to point out that, there has been a considerable decrease in poverty levels due to what the modernist call the trickle down effect of the development process. In addition, there is what is called a wider dispersion of disposable incomes leading to a large base of the consuming class.

The metros are emerging and their development is less due to traditional sources of wealth like land or industry but on education and professional/technical skills. Aspirations are whetted by the exposure to better lifestyles; the consuming class begins to replicate the culture of the west, what would then set apart people will be what they buy rather than where they came from. (The Week, 2001:14)

Globalisation “marks a turning point in recent world history when market-centered ‘structural adjustment’ replaced state-centered ‘development’ as the new globally dominant ideological paradigm” (Deshpande 2001:98).

#### Statistical Abstracts of Andhra Pradesh

Another source of data for the state of Andhra Pradesh is the government abstracts. Table 2, provides a general measure of increase in revenue, commodity wise, of the state for the years 1982-83, 1993-94, and 2003-04. This in an index of the rise in consumer power to spend more money.

Table2: Commodity wise Revenue incurred by the state of Andhra Pradesh

Revenue in lakh Rupees			
Name of the commodity	1982-1983	1993-1994	2003-2004
Chinaware	74.56	507.93	No Data
Confectionaries	963.49	9,353.91	27,644.49
Cooked Food	458.83	10,273.00	5637.05
Cooking Gas (not kerosene)	No Data	11,725.91	2,04,131.98
Cosmetics	1,687.92	17,342.92	67,440.90
Flasks	6.12	227.38	No Data
Footwear	1,898.36	10,257.64	22,130.05
Furniture-	106.46	6,648.97	6,526.86
Liquor	2,983.92	78,224.20	1,99,257.76
Motorized Vehicles- cars, tractors, parts	6,429.19	16,687.61	4,19,746.62
Precious Stones, Jewellery	2.70	2,141.11	No Data
Preserved Food, canned and pickles	16.28	383.00	No Data
Pressure Cookers	81.02	No Data	No Data
Pulses	5,911.49	37,834.25	71,036.05
PVC Articles, pipes and other goods	168.07	11,999.39	42,331.00
Readymade Garments	886.39	4,002.63	42,595.43
Refrigerators, A/C plants, coolers	792.30	0	44,843.77
Telephones	1,865.95	No Data	No Data
Typewriters	1.90	315.48	No Data
Watches and Clocks	719.62	1,410.10	6,1812.76

Source: Statistical Abstracts of the State of Andhra Pradesh. 1984, 1994, 2003.

The table indicates that the state has profited from earnings of the various goods. There is a clear indication that there has been a rise in expenditure on all levels of commodities. This data suggests that apart from mere consumer expenditure of the NSS rounds, there have been other kinds of expenses. The question to be asked is not merely, what the data mean and why there is a rise in expenditure. This would be simply stating the obvious that there has been a rise in income, rise in prices and increase in the rate of inflation. For Deleuze (Buchanan, 2000), the question to ask is what does the data do? What do such numbers accomplish in the efforts of the state? One clear answer is that it serves the purpose of storing data for future policy measures. Another point is that the data so conceptualized makes the patterns of expenditure and added revenue a selling point to the investors.

In addition, the most revenue earned by the state is from the two “fuels” of consumption- gas and liquor. The data on cosmetics, watches and clocks, motorized vehicles, readymade garments and refrigerators have another story to tell. These numbers indicate a rise in consumption of consumer durables. The availability of a disposable income has made the extra expense possible.

The question one can ask is –what happened on the economic fronts, which lead to the process of liberalization of the economy? In the fiscal year 1990-91, India went through an economic crisis. Because of political unrest in West Asia in 1990, oil prices rose leading to a depletion of forex reserves and rise in inflation rates. The IMF loan at this time had its conditionalities that enabled the “restoring of the inflation rates to single digits and the structural changes to raise the rate of economic growth in a sustained way”. The state became less interventionist and the market took on the lead to develop capital. Such measures included drastic changes in the economic front leading

to a more liberalized regime for foreign investments (Parthasarathi and Mukhopadhyaya, 1998:1925).

In such a delineated context, consumption took on a new meaning different from the previous formulations. In the past consumption, patterns were rigorously mapped in order to measure welfare policies. Current consumption expenditure as a proxy of permanent income was considered appropriate in order to also measure consumption patterns and calorific value of food products; to find out the 'lack' in the various nutrition components. An overall estimate of poverty levels was also calculable from this because, what one eats and consumes is a measure of income level.

Joshi's (1996:1-12) analysis can be situated in the context of the restructuring of the economy that was underway along with other changes. There have been enormous changes in the ethos of Indian cities and the rural areas. His analysis of the NSS data can be seen in the light of the government policies, which were enabling the market to take on a new dimension with the available information. In addition, these processes were about the possibilities of engaging capital in the cultural arena. Economic development moved to the processes of 'cultural consumption.' Capital sought its new avenues for accumulation, as it does in the phase of advanced capitalism, in the cultural realm. From the focus on the development narrative in the "*nation as an imagined economy*" (Deshpande 2003:48-73, italics added), the focus has shifted to the people- the middle class. This class is the representative of the nation in the global now. It is this middle class, which has made an easy transition into the 'global now' with the help of the media- the new visual regime (Rajagopal 2002:66). It is the middle class, which is envisioned as the mover of the new economy. "the middle class no longer claims to merely represent people (who alone were thought to constitute the nation in

the era of development), but rather that it is itself the nation... this class has now graduated to thinking of itself as a 'portrait' of the nation (Deshpande, 2003:150)".

In this specific context, one can say that the economic focus has shifted from production to the realm of consumption. It is in the middle class that one sees the national personality of India of the global present. Balibar (1995:149) quoting Spinoza says that the 'construction of the subject' is conditioned by the existence of systemic narratives, institutions, and representations. The making of the middle class as a consumer is seen in the narratives in the various media, the economic policies of the state supported by the rise in income levels of almost all the social classes. The Indian middle class personality is in the image of the global consumer. In the years prior to globalization, this personality was in the image of the economy. The force of such 'subjectivity' was possible through the middle class, which was the prime focus of the development narrative. This was given to us through narrative strategies, in and through the media, education system, and law –the complete epiphenomenon of culture, which is like a product of history and was situated over the base of the economy. The Indian personality before the decade of globalisation had taken hold was a reflection of the socialist principles of saving and welfare as emphasized in the Constitution. A reading of the Preamble of the Constitution then would underline and make bold the notion of social development. A structural adjustment, which started in the late 1980s, reflected the need for a different narrative, which was necessarily the secular and quite deliberately was not the socialist principle.

The image of a national personality presented as an illusion provides for the continuity of the subject. Such a process of representation of a subject is seen in and through the media images. This illusion is handed down to us as an invariant substance and given to us as a destiny. Such an illusion hides institutional realities. The national

personality according to Balibar (1995:149) provides for a continuity of the subject. For Balibar, it is this continuity of the subject which marks the possibility of a nation altogether. According to him, this is made possible through the enabling processes of the media in maintaining the illusion of the national personality. This national personality in India is reflected in the “middle-class” protagonist in all the media. This being the case, it is the middle class, which is the pivot upon which the contradictory balance of the global, the local, the rich consumer, and the frugal consumer is maintained. The question is how is this made possible? For Balibar, project (mission/development) and destiny (future/luck) are two symmetrical figures of the illusion of national identity. The national identity is a mixture of both development provided for by the state and fortune which is brought about by one’s luck. The latter can simply be termed one’s cultural capital or the intellectual property from education and jobs. This illusion is enabled through “myths” related to origins and national continuity. “It is an effective ideological form. It constitutes the imaginary singularity of national formation constructed daily by moving back from the present to the past”. Therefore, the “myth” of the citizen-subject is reinvented and placed in a position of esteem. The austerity of the previous state policies reflected in the previous generation (parents) is celebrated in the advertisements. This generation of the new middle class enjoying the fruits of liberalization policies is presented to them as worthy earnings, well-deserved rewards.

Here it is useful to draw upon Fernandes (2000:620), who says that the middle class is the national personality where the nation is revisioned. It is through the middle class that a process of adjustment from a developmentalist to a liberal economy is brought about.

The notion of the economy is discarded of its content such that it is no longer the nation, which is the focus of development but the middle class as a consumer. This class is participating in the economy not as citizen-subjects for development but as consumer-subjects for globalization of the economy. There is an equation between the economy and the middle class but without the nation as the focus. The middle class has itself as the focus of all economic development. Being middle class means being part of the new commercial revolution. An economy stripped off its welfare state policies has a new garb of a globalizing consumer. It is the economy, which is defining new avenues for the accumulation possibilities of the global capital. What are missing from the picture are the realities of the rest of the populace who remain in the margins of development.

Consumption thus, is a dialogue with the austerity/frugality of the past. It is treated as a positive “pat-in-the-back” to consume and spend on oneself. To consume is to be global, because it is what the whole world (read America) does. It is the norm to consume.

The ‘self’ as the new image in TV advertising is about exploring one’s inner nature, to pamper oneself, to encourage oneself. The individual is the focus of the market forces. He/she is in the market, where one is exposed to the brute economy- for a price. Consumption is one of the indicators of being global. However not all kinds of consumption are global. What one consumes puts you in a dialogue with the important notions of one’s class position. The class structure is the basis for the perception of one’s social world. If global capital beckons and interpellates the middle class Indian, then it is within these structural constraints that the middle class decodes the meaning of consumption. Consumption as situated within the ‘cultural’ realm is a ‘culture of consumption’, the reality for the middle class.

The rationale behind the culture of consumption as depicted in the purpose of the media and the entertainment industry is within the structural constraints of global capital. The new liberalized economy of India is the structure through which the image of the middle class exists. The media portray what the economy desires and the economy provides what the middle class desires. The supply- demand logic creates the tension and energy for the symbolic hunger to deepen and sustain.

Balibar (1995:159) in the process of deconstructing Marx says that the work of deconstruction is “to tease out positively and affirmatively another problematic, another schema of historical causality”. Therefore, for him historical materialism is not the sum of a base and superstructure, working like a complement of history. The unidirectional nature of causality with economy as the defining mode in the last instance is the traditional Marxist theory of materialism. Balibar proposes a combination of two bases of explanation or two determinations both incompatible and indissociable. These modes are the mode of subjection (ideological) and the mode of production (economic). Both have an effect on each other and influence each other. For Balibar “The effects of the imaginary (ideological) can appear only by means of the real (economic), and the effects of the real through and by means of the imaginary. Structural law of causality in history is the detour through and by means of the other scene”. In this regard, that which is imaginary is the ‘real’. It is in the purview of the structure (economy) that the imaginary (ideological) can exist.

The collective formations of the imaginary and the symbolic frame do not prescribe any future outside present day constraints of accumulation, the state, and class struggle. So all traces of the ideological past: nationalism, patriotism, racism, religion, socialism- are all situated within the present day constraints of accumulation, the state and class struggle. (Balibar, 1995:160)

Consumption was previously situated in the structures of the 'private' cultural practices of weddings, festivals, and rituals. Now it has come into the public arena and has acquired new and multiple meanings. It is seen in the new response to the modern forces of globalisation.

Everyday practices of shopping, entertainment, leisure, decorating the home, working and education, finances and expenditure patterns have all made an about-face from a simple practice of consumption to a more layered and multidimensional aspect which has to be considered in the context of the new market forces sourced through the global capital. All these categories have new meaning to people with disposable incomes made possible by global capital. In the frugal past, expenses on a son's education and a daughter's wedding and festivals were the only major expenses of a middle class income or the household capital. These expenses that were considered a necessary burden, have acquired a new celebratory character. The media, especially television, has given the process of consumption a new meaning altogether. To be global is to consume. The new ethic of globalization constantly requires and prompts one to consume.

As Fernandes (2000:612) points out "...images weave together the symbolic fabric of a hegemonic political culture in a liberalizing India. And that the imagined form of the global is itself produced through cultural signs and symbols that rest on the deployment of the nationalist narratives". This shift in the paradigm of economy is negotiated in the open and contested realm of the various media. The articulation of the ideologies of the global is done in the language of public cultures. This makes the ideologies easy to digest.

"The transition in the political culture in contemporary India"—from a focus on poverty reduction as an objective of state policy to liberalization, "signifies the ways in

which the Indian nation has been re-imagined in the context of globalisation. Visual representations of newly available commodities provide a lens through which meanings attached to such commodities weave together narratives of nationhood and development with the production of middle class identity” (Fernandes, 2000:615).

The imagination of India as a nation, evokes notions of – mother India, a hardworking farmer, an office going babu, dams and industries and of course no mention of the women except as an eternal fixture in the kitchen giving nourishment and sustenance to the whole family. These were largely the ideas of a developmentalist, socialist narrative, and post independence- images given to us via things like coins, calendar art, movies, notebook covers, and the NCERT education system. According to Lefort (1988), this would represent a ‘regime’ of development instanced in the state centered economic development. For Lefort, a ‘regime’ is “the manner of shaping of human coexistence” (p.217) made possible through the media and other socializing apparatuses of the state. The present day regime is that of consumption propagated by the media with full force and supported by the market and the political institutions.

However limited this idea of the economy was, in retrospect, it was a strong one. It took the nation through and held its own spirit, which was given a firm backing by the middle class- the chief protagonist in the story after independence. The middle class was the specialist, the intellectual in the hegemonic struggle for independence and later for development. The present day represents, according to Rajagopal (2002:66), the regime instanced by television; it is the regime of consumption. For Rajagopal, “the institution of a new visual regime thus involves a process of the reconfiguration of politics and the reshaping of the public; it simultaneously presents a technology for the perception of social relations and for staging them before society at large” (p.75n).

Globalization has been the harbinger of mass proliferation of the alternative 'nation' through the media- especially television. This has been made possible by the media on the one hand and the regime of consumption on the other. The prerequisites for such a proliferation were already there, in the TV stations in the 1980s – the late Indira Gandhi and early Rajiv Gandhi phase.

The nation in the imagined form is not in the notion of the economy anymore. The nation is in the idea of its people who are the consumers. It is electronic capitalism, which has consistently enabled and facilitated the making of the new consumer -the middle class Indian. Electronic media in all its forms – TV, internet, video conferencing etc. first enables the formation of “communities of sentiment” (Appadurai 1996:8), which are the movers of the economy. The mass media, for Appadurai creates these communities “where a group imagines and thinks together”. Consumption is in this sense the “work of the imagination”.

Consumer society is a society producing abundance and scarcity - the bulk consumer goods in the former and the rare Society Exhibitions with their high-end pricing, in the latter. The bulk of the consumer goods are for the bulk of the middle class and the scarce ones are for the upper middle class propagated through the rare exhibitions, which try to keep a limited clientele. It produces plenty for the masses and paucity for the connoisseurs. It must produce repletion and appetite, satisfaction and desire. Such a constant juxtaposition creates a symbolic thirst that constitutes a contradiction (Goux). The middle class, in its position of subordination and dominance is an ideal group for such exploitation, however much it enjoys the exploitation. India is the location of extreme form of poverty and is also home to the largest individual possessors of gold in the world, with China ranked second (RK Swamy/BBDO1998:21).

The thirst is intensified through the creation of a constant lack- deprivation. Advertisements reflect the imaginary. They are the concrete examples of a relation between economy and culture, they reflect what is real. According to Rajagopal (2002:71), “circulation of images enables circulation of capital, pushes it to another level, and deepens the reach of production of value”. For Rajagopal, images produce value, and for Goux, it is the production of desire that produces value. Production of desire is through the causality of the images, which produces value.

Desire is a product, a feeling of a lack, a want. It is desire that enables the circulation of capital. The global capital in all its pervasive form is visible in the public domains of the market, the entertainment industry i.e. the theme parks, clubs, resorts; the malls - with stores for the personal and for the home and new jobs. The most important form is the jobs, which are the chief source of global capital. In order to examine the new meanings attached to new forms of capital and new forms of expenditure, the attempt of this study is to understand the everyday patterns of consumption for this class. Consumer practices are the key to understanding the meaning of consumption and what consumption means to the middle class. The middle class is the class moving the middle ground and here it is the ‘centre’ of all activity. It is in the middle of all economic activity. Of course, one is not attempting in any way to ignore the ‘mass’-ive nature of the rural markets in India which have been suddenly discovered by the market researchers again. The middle class has always been at the forefront of all activity even before independence. It has been the harbinger of the modern world into the tradition bound households. It is the ground on which the traversing of the old world and the new world is constantly taking place.

## From Citizen to Consumer: The Middle Class

The middle in the 'middle class' means that which is the core, the central, the focus. It is the hub and heart of the society. A dictionary definition provides ample meaning to the concept of middle class. For sociological purposes, one starts with the definition of class given by Rudra (1989:142). He says that a "class is a set of individuals who have similar relations with the means of production and who are such that they have no contradictions among themselves but who have contradictions with members of other classes". By contradiction, he means any conflict of interest arising out of the economic interest, which would be "durable" and have historical import. Rudra points to the class called the "intelligentsia," the persons who earn their living by the sale of their mental labour. Marx writes that, "Man is initially posited as a private property owner, i.e., an exclusive owner whose exclusive ownership permits him to preserve his personality and to distinguish himself from other men, as well as relate to them...private property is man's personal, distinguishing, and hence essential existence". (in Bourdieu 1984:280). For the middle class, their private property is their 'mental labor', 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu). It is what distinguishes them from the rest of the classes. For the incessant 'lack' that is felt by the middle class, the 'cultural capital' in this sense creates the sense of ownership. Rudra includes all white-collar workers, all office workers, teachers, writers and journalists, doctors and nurses, lawyers, engineers, technicians, politicians, professionals and trade union leaders. The people who are in business and making a profit are excluded from this definition.

The only source of commonality shared between all the members of this class is that they do not produce any values in the material sense of the term. They depend on the surplus generated by the other two classes (industrial capitalist and landowners) and

the state for their income. The other aspect shared by this class is the social one. They belong to the middle class. This class is the intelligentsia and the ruling class. It does not directly rule, but is such that the policies of the state further the interest of this class at the cost of other classes. This being a comprehensive and all encompassing definition has some problems with it. Beteille (1989:153) adds, as a critique, to this definition the difference between rule and dominance. The intelligentsia does not rule but it is the state apparatus that rules and it is the capitalist class that exercises dominance through the apparatus of the state. The intelligentsia, which is also a part of the apparatus of the state, propagates the ideology of the capitalist class.

Bardhan (1989:155-56) also adds to the critique, his own concept of human capital. According to Rudra, the professional class has no property base. For Bardhan, the idea of human capital in the form of education, skills, and technical expertise as the basis for differentiation and distinction is significant. Property is a bundle of rights that entitles one to acquire some kind of surplus. The members of the professional class by virtue of ownership of human capital, in terms of skills and education, stake claim on social surplus. This is similar to Bourdieu's concept of 'distinctions'. Social status provides for acquiring distinctions or social surplus. It is what labels you as better than the other person; it is not because of the material or monetary value you hold but because of what you have acquired through your abilities in terms of manners, etiquette, and culture.

These definitions are conceptually interesting but hard to work with. The definition of the middle class, as envisioned by Rudra, includes a judge and a lower division clerk, a software engineer and a teacher who obviously do not share equal access to all things material and neither do they share similar types of human/cultural capital- that of education.

Another way to look at middle class is the purely economic one of income differentiation. However, a strict income-based definition may not be possible since people do not divulge their incomes truthfully. Consumption expenditure may be a good substitute for income, but it still is a substitute. For example, relying on consumption expenditure underestimates the income of the rich and overstates that of the poor, because a smaller proportion of income is spent on consumption as we go up the ladder. The rich get richer and accumulate wealth faster than they can spend it, while the poor often spend their income faster than they can earn.

Sumanta Banejee's (1989) work on the middle class culture of colonial Bengal is interesting with its focus on Calcutta street culture. According to Banerjee, the colonial middle class in Calcutta was simultaneously placed in a position of subordination and domination. It was under the domination of the colonial rulers with their culture in a position of subordination and their domination, in turn, over the lower classes, which contributed to the definition of culture for the middle class. The lower class cultural forms of dance and music were not particularly appreciated by the British rulers so the 'bhadralok' or the educated classes of Calcutta rejected the same. Their own forms of dance and music became more refined and tuned to the tastes of the British. "The construction of hegemonic ideologies typically involves the cultural efforts of classes placed precisely in such a situation. Its contestation of this relation of subordination/domination was premised upon its cultural leadership of the indigenous people and political and economic domination by the British colonial elite". (Banerjee, 1989:33) The theoretical definitions pose an empirical problem while empirical data do not necessarily help in the theorizing of phenomena.

As Deshpande (2003:133) puts it, "a good definition is one that is good to think with and how we define middle class depends on what we wish to do with the

concept". Thus defining a social group is less about correctly identifying a pre-existing group and more about deciding what kind of social group is useful to identify. Deshpande suggests three hypothetical definitions of the middle class that may be "good to think with". Building on Gramsci, Deshpande first says that middle class is the class that articulates the hegemony of the ruling bloc. By this it not only mediates between this bloc and other classes, it also translates the relations of domination into the language of legitimation.

Next, similar to Beteille's notion of human capital, the middle class is most dependent on cultural capital and the mechanisms for reproduction of such capital. Cultural capital fulfills three attributes of property: it confers tangible and psychological benefits; it can be privatized, i.e. others can be excluded from enjoying their benefits; and finally it can be transmitted across generations. The middle class due to its internal differentiation works as a support system for its own ideologies. The elite section, similar to Beteille's intelligentsia, specializes in production of ideologies and the mass section "engages in exemplary consumption" (p.141) of these ideologies, thus investing them with legitimacy. Not only that, the mass section adds to the legitimacy of the elitist ideologies by sheer volume and numbers.

A totally different view is espoused by Leichty (2003:67) who calls for a processual understanding of the phenomenon of being middle class. His analysis on Nepal is about middle class and consumer culture. He says that more than a wage category or pattern of consumption, middle class is a terrain for negotiating the traditional and the modern.

For him middle class is a "social space where people negotiate the meanings of being a Nepali and being modern. A place to wed the realities of a transformed material and social universe with preexisting cultural values and discursive forms". For the

middle class Nepali, middle class is a dialogue, a space for constructing their unique modernity, which is different from the foreign modernism of elite above them and the lifestyles of “tradition” and poverty below them. Like most “modern” spaces, the “freedom” to enter the discursive space, to construct one’s own identity, is premised on the access to material resources – to an acquiring of cultural capital, thereby marking it as a zone of class practice and class production.

According to Fervert (Mahajan: 2003), in what is called the ‘bourgeois’ century- the nineteenth century- is a phase marked by middle class values and activities. In the context of Europe in the early part of the nineteenth century, work and self-formation were at the center of middle class culture. Both these helped to serve the purpose first of, securing of the hegemony in a socio-economic system, which needed middle class competencies against international competition. Second, they set apart the middle class from the nobility and the workers who lacked knowledge/education. The combination of both set the middle class apart from others and gave them a unique identity. The process of acquiring domination through work and creating an identity of one’s own through the cultural realm was the route to becoming a middle class.

Sanjay Joshi (2003:2-22) charts a course for the development and growth of the middle class through the colonial period in India. He says that the middle class can be best understood if we look at it as created by and a creator of a “public sphere”; that this ‘cultural entrepreneurship’ of the middle class was a process through which it acquired political, social and moral hegemony. For Joshi, middle class is constituted not by their socio-economic standing but through the public sphere. The middle class do something for themselves-“a project of self-fashioning”. The middle class have no direct ownership of capital, but ownership of something else- human capital converted into “qualifiers” of capital or eligibility criteria equated to higher compensations. Although Joshi is looking

at the colonial period, his concepts are insightful for understanding the stranglehold that the middle class historically had over the making of the 'cultural'.

Consumption, globalisation, and the middle class are elements of a larger process of cultural formation that is underway in the lives and practices of middle class people in India. It is impossible to talk of only one without mentioning the other because all the three constantly overlap. In both the frame of references of development and globalisation, the middle class is the protagonist. Even though it has deferred conceptualizations and slipped through the typical theorizing aspects of sociology, middle class has amassed layers of ideas, which become interesting as one begins the task of peeling the layers.

The middle class in India was a product of the development process of nation building. Development gave precedence to industrial and scientific –technical processes upon which the middle class professionals would preside. A trickle down theory assumed that the benefits would finally reach the people who had no active role to play. In addition, the focus of the education system on scientific and technical fields gave precedence to the middle class again. It was by no teleological reasoning that the participation in development became available to the middle class. This sowed the seeds for disenchantment of the lower classes. The vast majority of the people- the lower castes and the regional middle class- were left out of this process of development, creating disillusionment and possibly leading to the differentiation of the middle class. It is this differentiation of the middle class, which laid the ground for the loss of hegemony. The ideology of development lost favor and laid ground for newer ideologies of globalisation being formed. In Deshpande's (2003:145) words: "As various fractions of the middle class evolved in their different ways, their perceived self-interests took them further and further away from the nation-state and the divergence

between the ideology of development and the middle class increased over time". If one looks at this concept of 'self-interest' one can say that people choose to be a part of the middle class. They choose to be classified as such. It is not a question of mere capabilities and qualifications (although they are the primary requirements in a sense) since a middle class is not an economic class in a quantifiable sense. The non-ownership of means of production in a sense, a certain lack, motivates action. For the middle class, this deficit is in terms of the non-ownership of means of production, which for this reason makes them the 'producers of culture' in a sense or 'cultural entrepreneurs' in Sanjay Joshi's (2003:6) context.

Historically, one can say that the middle class is from either one of the classes - the capitalist or the proletariat; the rich bourgeoisie or the poor; the feudal lords or the farmer; the zamindars or the laborers. With India's independence, the effort was to create a new identity, a new life, better living conditions. The process of empowerment and amelioration is at the heart of middle class society. It tries to set for itself boundaries and controls in order to differentiate itself from the others in the society. The process of a self-fashioning required setting of boundaries, invoking elements of tradition and culture. One does not have the money as the capitalists do and is not as deprived as the labor class. At least one has the abilities and qualifications, which bring in good income. There was cautiousness about their practices, an attempt to safeguard culture and avoid being labeled as one of the two classes. One had to become modern too, which required some ideological distance from others. In addition, the rational world of economic amelioration is in contradiction with the non-rational/traditional world of culture. The contradictions in the two worlds are at the focus of the middle class identity politics. The conflict of these two worlds is the ground on which middle classness is typified in all its variety. The construction of this selfhood, however, was

within the constraints of the economy. The unfreedoms of the post-colonial economy are found in the nature of jobs, which are status markers. One does not find too many artists, singers, and sportsmen. One finds that education is of paramount importance. One finds doctors who are also great singers, scientists who play the flute well, and cricketers who have a master's degree and so on.

To be free to pursue a talent means to be already "well educated". Education is a natural part of being middle class. Education defines and provides for the self-fashioning. This self-fashioning through education was a modernist project. It was a break from the traditions of the past.

Modernity had fixed indicators, according to Joshi, about patterns of economic organization, social relations, or cultural values. Being or becoming modern was a project, an aspiration. Modernity is not a goal in itself but an ideology to be lived. It is a continuous dialogue with the past. Indian middle class, for Joshi are both the producers and the products of modernity. (2003:9)

Globalisation as another ideology took hold after 1990s and the protagonist again is the middle class. As a process of interpellation, globalisation has found its subjects. The fact that the system, the 'structure' is working and someone is reaping the great benefits of this process means that there are subjects out there who are being interpellated by the agents of globalization. The MNCs, the trade organization, the media could be loosely called the agents of globalization. In addition, the concept of consumption enters this discussion in the realm of the media. In this context, the production of the global occurs through the nationalist imagination constantly depicted through the various media.

The focus of the economy prior to globalization has been the processes of development. Capitalism finds its showground of accumulation within the cultural realm

in the context of consumption. Consumption is the new face of the globalizing India. Capital pervades through the cultural spaces in the practices of education, career, leisure, and shopping, and home interiors apart from consumption of food.

numbers in a market survey, it is the everyday life worlds of the people. The numbers in consumption data give a partial picture where the context is missing. The concept and the context of consumption will be best understood in the everyday life practices.

Consumption theory in that sense grew out of the North American consumption scenario, which is firmly embedded in the late capitalism, post modernist phase of things in general. Theory came first in this context. Then one came across the questions that sometimes worked and sometimes did not. Venturing into the field added to the repertoire of notes and observations that were gathered to understand the concept of consumption.

Life histories of people revolve around consumption. Consumption, according to Bourdieu, is lived culture. So lived culture involves people's everyday lives, their preferences for shopping areas, their leisure activities, their careers, education processes. Culture encompasses all consumption processes. It is the bedrock of justification for the kind of issues that are dealt with while one met the respondents for my study.

India has been a developmentalist economy until the 1980s. Secular and socialist – were inscribed in the Constitution. One read this emphatically. The NSSO (National Sample Survey Organization) since the year 1950 has been conducting regular surveys to study the consumption habits of the people. The surveys serve as the statistical base for social policy issues taken up by the government from time to time. These surveys were part of the Welfare State measures to tabulate and quantify poverty, employment-unemployment levels and enable projections for economic development. The 'developmentalist' character of the surveys is symbolic of the larger project of the economy in general.

The journal of NSSO –Sarvekshana (April- September 2001: 14-18) says that the average MPCE (Monthly Pre Capita Expenditure) for urban India is Rs. 855 with

Rs. 1325 as the upper limit. The share of food in total consumption expenditure was 48 per cent in urban areas. In case of the maximum share on food items was observed in the states of Bihar (57 per cent), Orissa (57 per cent), and Assam (55 per cent).

Late 1980s saw a few major, path breaking historical milestones that are noteworthy in this context. In 1989-1990, the Indian economy loosened up its licensing and international trade policies. Government opened up its markets for a liberal trading. Early 1990s saw the opening up of the airwaves in India. The coming of the satellite TV brought in multiple channels instead of a single government controlled Doordarshan. The channels brought with it the exposure to American soap operas, movies and more.

Media played a major role in creating images of the transformations occurring in middle class families in India. The image industry – especially television with family shows, the magazines, movies, and TV programmes, advertisements, focused on the culture of consumption as envisaged and brought about in the West, which was waiting to be replicated in urban India. This brought about changes in the levels of consumption in the various levels within the middle class.

The expenditure patterns changed from the previous years. Expenses previously limited to festivals, weddings, have on the one hand, increased dramatically, and on the other have become more diverse. Savings that were typically meant for education, house ownership, and /or wedding have increased considerably. However, the investments and expenses have diversified to include 'new consumer choices' which were absent in the past. These new choices have been brought about due to the changes in the economy. The economic changes- major structural changes from a state controlled to a liberalized one –have had important meaning in terms of social and cultural influence.

For a liberal capitalist economy, accumulation and reproduction have different meanings than the previous state controlled economy. Capitalism finds its avenues of

accumulation in the sphere of culture, in the superstructure. Capital needs culture to reproduce. The process of accumulation and reproduction is made possible through and via the regime of consumption, which is located in the cultural and symbolic economy. The market economy of consumption has as its base not the demand for need satisfaction -a non-elastic demand but production of desire.

The nation is envisioned in the middle class through the narrative of globalization in the advertisements. Fernandes (2000:612) points out that it is in the 'hegemonic political culture' that one instances the images of a liberal India. For her these images are the new 'symbolic fabric' of the country, which is fast liberalizing. Before the structural adjustment process, the media context was that of development. The soap operas and advertisements were within the rubric of development and the welfare logic of the state policies.

### **Empirical work**

One of the most interesting works done on consumption practices is by Chattopadhyay, Mukherjee, and Rudra (1989). They deal with the income differentials according to occupation and the level of living. In a set of three articles, they come to see consumption as the key indicator of 'difference' or inequality in the final instance. According to the study, the correlation between income and level of expenditure is found to be rather weak. Dealing with the public sector employees from banks and the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) it takes as its respondents the officers, assistants, managers, and clerks- the middle class from an urban area in Kolkatta. The study reveals, "consumption expenditure is dependent not so much on income but on other factors like tastes, culture, customs, habits and so on". (Chattopadhyay, Mukherjee, and Rudra, 1989:882) For the Bengali middle class it is the norms and

customs of the society that are more important than the economic capacity to consume. The study shows that the proportion of income spent on weddings and other ceremonies is much more for office assistants compared to the officers themselves. A certain amount of expenditure is set aside for this purpose- a standard practice irrespective of income differentials among different ranks of people in an office.

The second part of the study by the same authors, (p.1669-1674) suggests that in middle class households with marginal income differences it is the social and cultural aspect of expenditure that is the driving force behind consumption. It suggests that small differences in income do not affect the *level of living* (emphasis mine). Despite variations of incomes and fringe benefits, it suggests a social homogeneity, insensitivity to income differentials, giving rise to common values, aspirations and styles. The small differences in level of living within the same income bracket, is not attributed to economic, but cultural and social factors. These factors are one's community, exposure to different aspects of culture. This is similar to the notion of 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1984:101), which is the space of the social for the individual. With little in terms of income disparities, inter-group variations are hard to gather. Nevertheless, if the object of study is the 'level of living' then one ought to look at consumption patterns.

My study deals with consumption and the middle class in the context of globalization. Consumption as a category of lived practices of individuals, of decoding culture, of using up of surplus, (the disposable income) is situated in the lives of the people in the present world- post-liberalization.

### **Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The aims of the study are constituted in the conversations in the field or, as a corollary, conversations, discussions, and the discourse of the field reflect the objectives

of the study. In order to make the transition from a metaphysical imagination impregnated with theory and concepts, one needs the same to be a part of a general discourse. Consumption as “lived culture,” encoding and decoding of culture itself makes for a telling topic of discussion in general. Conceptual clarity, discussion of one’s ideas leads on to everyday life issues. The aims of this project are:

- To study the sources of the concept of consumption prior to the changes in the economy.
- To understand the context of the lives of the middle class before and after liberalization.
- To understand how a middle class citizen-subject, ‘development-of-nation’ oriented person has negotiated the process of economic liberalization in terms of becoming a consumer-subject. Alternatively, how have the income levels helped in making the transition from a citizen to a consumer.
- To study the qualitative descriptions of everyday life practices of consumption and to find out if these are situated in the ‘final instance’ in the economy, in the “logic of capital” or more simply the incomes of the respondents.
- To understand what kind of incomes enable what kind of consumption of capital like education, job etc.
- To study the interplay of the media and income levels.

#### Objectives operationalized

The prime focus of the study is the middle class. They have been in the loop of all changes in the said context. They have been studied by the market research firms and other research agencies revealing a diverse set of data. These data are mostly based on quantitative analysis and treats the middle class and their consumption practices in terms of numbers. The universal and homogenizing force of such an analysis becomes a given.

It tries to estimate from the data changes in the variables for future market policies. The producers and consumers of such data is also the middle class who are enthused by their own image and work at reproducing its image in different ways ('Eye' in Bourdieu, 1984:3). If consumption is deciphering everyday aspects of culture, then the Indian middle class is doing exactly that. It is decoding and deciphering the new avenues of consumption. This is being done through shopping in general, visits to new consumption arenas like exhibitions, film city tours, new shopping malls, etc.,

Narratives of consumption are reproduced through the media in order to manage the change and flux so obviously felt despite the pleasures of consumerism. The kind of consumption and the things that are consumed and the way they are consumed have an indigenous character to the society. Notwithstanding the different ways of consumption possible, some objects, ideas, and notions of consumption are localized to suit a culture. They are indigenized in that sense.

- Which brand of clothes are popular and why all the difference? Which store is better? Why?

The difference in perception is to do with how 'things' and ideas in general are mediated to the middle class. The relatives living abroad (read America) provide the mediations; media narratives, strongly backed by applied market research. Market research a well-developed and complex area of study draws its technical expertise from the middle class.

- The necessities are transformed into luxuries for which, one reason is the disposable income that was in surplus of the previous (generations) income levels. In what form was consumption before and in what intensity? How is it different now? How did a once in a year purchase of clothes become more frequent? How did this 'frugal living' mutate into 'consumerism'?

- Globalization is then the new technique in establishing hegemony at the economic level. This is done through advertisements. This is enshrined in the ideology of consumption, which is part of the language of building hegemony. What kinds of advertisements are popular and on what basis do people make final purchases?
- The transformation of shopping for festivals alone has come a long way traversing the private sphere of consumption to a social and popular leisure time ritual. What do people have to say about shopping in general and specifics about the nature of shopping?

Globalization is sold locally through the ideology of consumption. The economic base of the middle class families has been consolidated to a large extent through the incomes or the global capital. There is excess in the disposable incomes and through the logic of the culture of consumption, the hegemony of globalization is stabilized. This has its implications in the media advertisements where consumption itself is constantly celebrated.

- The question would be –why spend a certain percentage of lifetime earnings on a wedding? Why spend on firecrackers, dowry etc, and be frugal when it comes to giving away old clothes and buying something you really need- a car, a washing machine.
- Alternatively, a question for the upper middle class would be the possession of two vehicles. Why two vehicles? What does it mean?

The constant possibility and potential for consumption is seen as a potential only. The fact that consumption or *dépense* (expenditure) is possible and never taken up, is an indication of a certain kind of modernity that sees potential in investment and saving rather than consumption.

- What are the interests and aspirations of the respondents, for them and their children? What do they see their futures holding for them?
- The goods that have arrived into the markets and homes mean that there is technology entering the households. For the user-typically the women, what do these new forms of technologies mean?

### **Classifying the middle class**

One made a cautious choice of following the classifications of the government agency National Council for Applied and Economic Research (NCAER), Rao and Natarajan (1996:2) in coming up with exact income parameters for locating the middle class.

The NCAER data is based on a very broad classification of households. Households are classified into five income groups on the basis of total annual income for the year 1993-94. Household income includes the income of all members of the household and all the sources. The following Table3 gives income groupings according to class with incomes for a year at 1993-94 prices.

*Table 3: Income wise classification of household into social classes for 1993-1994*

<u>Social Class</u>	<u>Income per annum in Rupees</u>
Lower Class	20,000
Lower Middle Class	20,001 to 40,000
Middle Middle Class	40,001 to 62,000
Upper Middle Class	62,001 to 86,000
High Class	Above 86,000

*Source: Rao S.L and Natarajan (1996): Consumer Market Demographics in India. NCAER. New Delhi.*



This is the classification of the whole population and the middle class category ranges between the income categories of Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 86,000 for the year 1993-1994. The classification helps to set up a broad parameter for the study. There may be variations in the classifications but it is useful to stay with this idea because their study (Rao and Natarajan, 1996), also looks at the middle class as the consumption class. For Rao and Natarajan (1996: xiii), income is not a good enough framework to understand consumption patterns and the changes in the 'market'.

“Consumption is a far better indicator. For a new product, consumption of an existing product at a price which is similar in relation to the value of the new product may be more relevant than the distribution of the population by income” (p.xi). To be sure, when the market expansion is on the lines of more choices for the existing commodities, then mere incomes of such a large population is of little import. It is the already existing lifestyles and consumption patterns, or the culture of consumption, which, is a better way to understand the peoples. This middle class category ranges from 152 to 485 million people for the year 1993-1994.

In The Week magazine, Bibek Debroy (2001:43) gives another, typical market picture of the different income levels and comes up with the basis for a definition of a middle class. Table 4 gives a picture of the income categories in rupees, and their classifications into different social classes for the years 1994-1995 and 2000-2001.

able 4: Income wise classification of household into social classes

Take-home Packet or the Annual Income		
Household	1994- 1995	2000-2001
Low income	Rs.22,500 or less	Rs.33,750
Lower middle	Rs.22,501-45,000	Rs.33751-67,500
Middle middle	Rs.45,001-70,000	Rs.67,501-1,05,000
Upper middle	Rs.70,001-96,000	Rs.1,05,001-1,44,000
High income	More than 96,000	More than Rs.1,44,000

Source: *The Week* December 30 2001 (p. 43).

Debroy scales up the income level according to the annual price rise and gives a tentative picture of the income levels of the years 1994-95 and again the years 2000 and 2001. Based on the data the middle class has an annual income between Rs.33, 750 and 1, 44,000 for the year 2001. A better way to look at the middle class is in terms of qualitative aspects like consumption patterns, job description, value of mental labor to physical labor and the like. The terms lower middle class, middle middle class, upper middle class, have been used solely as a distinguishing label between two kinds of households. An 'lower middle class' teacher sounds derogatory but, both the classifications- by Debroy and Rao and Natarajan, employ these categories to further differentiate within the middle class. Such a classification is useful only in explaining a characteristic within the middle class that shows an extreme difference in opinion, habit, or nature.

Another ground to locate the middle class was in the definition by Rudra (1989:144) for whom the middle class are the teachers, professional, clerks, managers etc who have a take home salary. For the middle class, their private property is their

'education', 'employment' (Bourdieu). It is what distinguishes them from the rest of the classes. For the middle class, it is the most important sense of property they possess.

Rudra includes all white-collar workers, all office workers, teachers, writers and journalists, doctors and nurses, lawyers, engineers, technicians, politicians, professionals and trade union leaders. The people who are in business and making a profit are excluded from this definition.

The upper caste in a move to empower itself transposed the private property-land- it had which paid for an education and a career in the development process of the nation. It transferred its high caste status in the tradition bound society before independence to another privileged position in the postcolonial period where education and a government job gave 'distinction' or provided cultural pay offs in ones community. These were the new status symbols. The middle class is involved in this process of grabbing benefits of 'distinctions' in this sense in order to set themselves apart from the other classes.

### Location

The area of study is Hyderabad -the capital of the state of Andhra Pradesh. With an annual growth rate of 5.34 per cent in the years 1989-1991, Hyderabad is the sixth largest cities in India with a population of 55.3 lakhs (5.53 million). It is one of the fastest growing cities in India with an ever-increasing population. (MCH, 2003:55). Hyderabad was a part of the software boom all over the world since the late 1990s and the market still seems to be soaring. Most of the IT companies have their offices here and it is home to the Software Technology Park in the newly developed Madhapur area in the outskirts of the city. From the days of what is called 'body shopping' to the days of the call centers, Hyderabad has grown immensely in size and numbers. The many

avenues of global capital from the IT industry and the infrastructure that supports such an industry; to the new avenues of entertainment available for the purpose of spending the disposable incomes Hyderabad is home to a lot of 'new money'. Hyderabad is the place to be and this is where my study has happened to take shape.

### Interview

The procedure for data collection adopted for this study is in-depth interviews, observation, and detailed descriptions of "middle class" families. The interviews conducted with the aid of an interview guide (see appendix). There was no questionnaire since the whole interview was recorded from the beginning to the end. Each respondent inhabits a life world and one immediately starts getting cues into their tastes, like and dislikes. These are enabling cues for starting of a conversation or bringing in one's agenda of research and the respondents into the loop so to say. An object of interest in the respondent's house – for e.g. a candelabra might bring into discussion a particular shop, (high-end to art expo), a particular material (terracotta, marble, copper) into the forefront of discussion and enable the starting and eventually a free flow of discussion around research questions. The interviews were conducted over two different time periods after a gap of four years. The first sets of interviews were conducted in the years 1999-2000. The next sets of interviews were conducted in 2005. All attempts were made the second time to meet the same respondents again, but some of them could not be reached because they had moved.

### The field

The respondents were chosen through mutual friends and such acquaintances. This enabled the researcher to meet only those people who were interested in giving

quality time ranging from a couple of hours to an entire afternoon. This made for uninterrupted flow of the conversation. All the people in the household were interviewed with the same inventory of questions differently ordered according to the logic and sentiment of the conversations. The interaction was on a personal plane where the interviewer as early as possible made attempts to breakdown barriers of interaction. This was done by way of addressing the issue first i.e., the topic of research and then relating the same to the surroundings of the home and interiors. Alternatively, sometimes one ventured out with a different attitude and discussed television first if the 'box' were around and then get the conversation into the larger issue of consumption and the related questions. The discomfort or gaps in the conversation were avoided by making a general note on the key issue of a particular question for example. The question of income-expenditure is related to one's job, so another related issue would be one's career choice.

An underlying link of consumption to all the issues was always there, which enabled a looping, or threading of the entire repertoire of questions together. This free form of starting a conversation and filling in gaps enabled one to always have something 'up one's sleeve' to keep the flow intact. Of course, it always helped to keep in mind that discomfort and silence were to be handled deftly instead of letting them grow and stop a conversation.

The number of households interviewed was 30. A household might have two interviews or five depending on the number of people willing and available for the interview. In all, there were 71 interviews. The respondents resided in a range of households reflecting their economic capabilities. The upper middle class in my study live in flats, 'own' homes in upscale locations of the city like Banjara Hills, Begumpet, Kapadia lane, Marredpally, Himayatnagar, and Padmaraonagar. The middle middle

class live in either flats or 'own' home in Anandnagar colony, Mehdipatnam, Barkatpura, Punjagutta colony, Chappel Bazaar, Malakpet areas. The lower middle class lived in the poorer parts of the areas. These areas might have households with a better economic standing too but these respondents were from smaller, poorer parts of the same locality. The localities were Errum Manzil Colony, Khairtabad, Koti, Lingampally, and Nimboliadda. These localities are the poorer parts of the city with affordable flats for the lower middle class. A point to be noted is that one does not find well-defined upper class areas or lower class areas in Hyderabad. Unlike the 'east side' and 'west side' of a western city or town an upper class area like Banjara hills might house the poorest of the lot. Likewise a lower class area like Chappel Bazaar, might house the rich business class family driving a Toyota Corolla. Of the 30 households, there were equal numbers, which were in independent or own homes (15) and in rented homes (15).

There were 32 men and 39 women respondents. The age groups varied from 18 years to 80 years. Of the 71 respondents, 29 were in the age group of 15-35 years; 29 were in the age group of 36-55 years; twelve were in the 56-75 age groups and one man was 80 years old. Out of these respondents, ten were below the age of 25 and were students who are now settled into jobs.

The upper middle class according to Rao and Natarajan (1996) comes under the income range of Rs.62, 000-Rs.86,000 per annum. Since the beginning of this study, the income levels have consistently gone up and the respondents of this class earn up to an average income of Rs.90,000 per month which makes it almost 11 lakhs per annum. Out of the 22 upper middle class respondents, five are retired and get a pension of Rs.15,000 per month. Two female respondents have always been homemakers. Ten respondents

(three female and seven male) of the upper middle class earn Rs.20,000 to Rs. two lakhs per month. These respondents work as executives, senior managers, and vice presidents. In the middle middle class with 31 respondents, 12 are in government service, which is pensionable, which is why they are a big status symbol. The income profile of the respondents is between Rs.40,000-Rs.62,000 (Rao and Natarajan, 1996) Three are housewives, six have a private job- a job related to global capital in terms of being related to the new economic reforms. One respondent works for a call centre in customer support, one is in a marketing unit of an IT company, and another one teaches in a private school/tutorial meant for engineering entrance exams.

The lower middle class falls in the income group of Rs.20,000-Rs.40,000 (Rao and Natarajan). Out of the nine women, eight are teachers and their salary ranges between Rs.1200-Rs.2000 per month. One female respondent is a homemaker whose husband has two jobs. Of the nine male respondents, three of them work at the LDC (lower division clerk) level in a government office and two have already retired. One male respondent is a sales clerk in an automobile dealership and two are students. Of all the respondents, the lower middle class have been the most difficult to locate after the gap of four years. Some of them have since moved out of their flats into their own houses.

In terms of employment categories, five women in the upper middle class are teachers, five in the middle middle class and eight from the lower middle class are also teachers. Their income ranges from Rs. 2000 to Rs. 20,000 per month. Such a sharp contrast in incomes is because the schools in the poorer neighborhoods pay less compared to the schools for the upper middle class where the pay is ten times higher.

### Coding, analytical memos, theory, and data

The overarching method of data collection and analysis is situated in the qualitative research principles enunciated by Strauss in his Grounded Theory Approach. His concept-indicator model directs the conceptual coding of a set of empirical indicators, which are basically actions, events, or behavior patterns. Similarities and differences between the indicators lead to comparisons and evolution of a single 'code concept'. According to Strauss (1987:25), "a conceptual code is generated, then the indicators are compared to the emergent concept... From the comparisons of additional indicators to the conceptual codes, the codes are sharpened to achieve their best fit to data". For example, the empirical indicators like impulsive buying, following the latest trends in clothing, high frequency of shopping, all are indicators of a teenage shopper. If these indicators are tied down as similarities or into a pattern, then one arrives at the emergent concept of "teenage shopper". The latter is an indicator and can be labeled a coded concept. More such actions can be related to the code named "teenage shopper". A fine-tuning occurs when another indicator with stark differences in shopping habits is arrived at. The empirical indicators like low shopping frequency, nylon saris, no eating out at all, are starkly dissimilar to the above-mentioned indicators. Thus, one arrives at a female shopper whose consumption habits are for survival and subsistence. This can be an example of 'subsistence shopping'. Two codes when compared lead to an analytical memo on shopping in general, structural constraints to shopping, symbolic aspect of shopping and the blatantly obvious fact gathered from data which says that an X amount of money is 'pocket money' for one with 'deep pockets' and for another a whole months income, or the only money in the pocket. In that sense concepts and their dimensions have to earn "their way into the theory by systematic generation from data" (p.26).

When these indicators are applied in various contexts and changed continuously the saturation point of the ideas occur thereby generating new properties of a code. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were browsed thoroughly for indicators and codes. Selective coding yields broad conceptual patterns, which are then used as the pivots to organize all the data. The categories related to consumption were leisure, media, shopping, home interiors, financial expenditures of households, and under a demographic variety- the income variable. Analytical memos which are basically 'notes' culled out from interviews and browsing of the transcripts, were written throughout the post-data collection phase. The memos elaborate on the codes, which enable clarifications for both- further fieldwork and analysis. The memos and codes together form the crucial base for analysis. These are integrated along with related literature, larger social trends, and statistics related to the issue to form the bulk of the analysis.

A useful, representative paragraph, line, word is quoted at length to bring out the "lived experiences" of the respondents as well as the common and topical nature of the discussions. Such a process reveals good "descriptions" (Runciman 1983:227) and the verbatim account is a 'ready-at-hand' story of consumption practices of the respondents.

#### 4. Cultural Capital and the Consuming Middle Class

Man is initially posited as a private property owner, i.e., an exclusive owner whose ownership permits him to preserve his personality and to distinguish himself from other men, as well as relate to them...private property is man's personal, distinguishing, and hence essential existence. (Marx, cited in Bourdieu 1984:280).

For the middle class, their private property is their 'mental labor' their 'cultural capital'. It is what distinguishes them from the rest of the classes. The mental labor is signified in the qualifications that they acquire through education. These qualifications are the stepping-stones or the rungs of the ladder, in a society. The mental labor is converted to private property through education, which is translated into jobs or occupation. It is their personal and distinguishing property central to their existence.

They depend on the surplus generated by the other two classes (industrial capitalist and landowners) and the state for their income. The other aspect shared by this class is the social one. They belong to the middle class. This class is the intelligentsia and the ruling class. It does not directly rule, but is such that the policies of the state further the interest of this class at the cost of other classes. The members of this class, by virtue of ownership of human capital in terms of skills and education, stake claim to social surplus. This according to Bardhan (1989:155) is the private property of the middle class. The idea of human capital in the form of education, skills, and technical expertise as the basis for differentiation and distinction is significant. Private property is the capital for the middle class and it is a bundle of rights that entitles one to acquire some kind of surplus. However, the middle class is internally differentiated and due to this variation works as a support system for its ideologies. The elite section specializes in production of ideologies and the mass section "engages in exemplary consumption" of these ideologies, thus investing them with legitimacy. Not only that, the mass section

also adds to the legitimacy by lending weight and volume to these ideologies (Deshpande 2003:141). In addition, for Fernandes the crossover between globalization, middle class, and consumption is crucial in understanding the changes around urban India.

In this image, the newness of the middle class rests on its embrace of social practices of taste and commodity consumption that mark a new cultural standard that is specifically associated with liberalization and the opening of the Indian market to the global economy. Images of mobility associated with newly available commodities such as cell phones and automobiles, for instance, serve to create a standard, which the urban middle classes can to. In this process, the new (urban) Indian middle class becomes a central agent for the revisioning of the Indian nation in the context of globalization.

The middle class as a category is divided into the lower middle class, the middle middle class, and the upper middle class. This is a rough classification according to S.L Rao (1996:5) in his *Consumer Demographics* where he tries to study the expanding market in India as a part of the globalization trend. This is an economic classification, which provides the basis for definition of the middle class for this study.

### Work and Careers

The jobs or careers of the middle class range across a broad spectrum of categories. Rudra's classification includes a judge at one extreme and an LDC (lower division clerk) at the other. The one common thread running across such a widely differing concept of the middle class is 'education' that serves as one's private property (which is not to deny possession of other forms of property). In terms of negotiating for the best jobs, the middle class has played the role of the legitimators of dominant ideology, the ideology of the ruling bloc. Building on Gramsci, Deshpande (2003:141)

says that middle class is the class that articulates the hegemony of the ruling bloc. By this it not only mediates between this bloc and other classes, it also translates the relations of domination into the language of legitimation.

The political and economic process of globalization is one of the many processes of domination. The capitalist class and the ruling elite (which now also includes the upper middle class), have a big stake in perpetuating this domination in order to further capitalist accumulation through globalization. The expansion of the IT industry in India and in Hyderabad is the example of economic domination of global capital.

The primary explanation for variation in careers is the economic one where one's life chances in terms of education, jobs etcetera are a matter of affordability. For the middle class, education is a marker of modernity and is the most significant symbol of cultural capital. Education is the currency to buy status and prestige among all sections of the society. Be it the poor or the very rich, education is the guarantor for prestige. Higher the education, higher the cultural capital. In the process one moves away or distances oneself from the traditional markers of identities like region and caste.

The economic benefits of such a move outweigh the losses. The careers of the middle class in that sense are in constant dialogue with the West. The demands of the job market, right from a software engineer to a scientist working with fiber optics or researching the lubricants used in space crafts, the 'system' in that sense looks to the West for better opportunities. It is the West, which orders or rather, one is constantly gleaning the requirements of what constitutes as being 'well qualified' or 'highly qualified'. In that sense, the issue at hand is not so much that of Americanization or a mass conversion phenomenon, but a subjective reading of the job market done by the educated middle class on a constant basis. The upper middle class is looking at jobs with

the highest dollar returns and unique opportunities while the middle middle class is going for a routinised avenue of job say, the government job and the lower middle class is doing neither because it doesn't have the capabilities to look as far ahead. Daniel Miller's (Holt and Schor 2000:238) conception of the relationship between consumption (in a more general context of commodity consumption) and subjectivity provides a framework that can be used to some extent to explain the difference in the jobs of the middle class.

For one of the respondents, Divakar, 47, to be successful is an end in itself. Divakar is a software professional with a doctoral degree from IIM (Indian Institute of Management) Calcutta and his wife, Shailaja, 37, also has a doctoral degree from IISC (Indian Institute of Science ) Bangalore- both from renowned national institutes, amongst the best the country has to offer. Shailaja's doctoral work was in solid-state physics and Divakar's was in artificial intelligence. Divakar has worked for various software companies and now works for an International Bank based in Pune now. His goal has been to be the best in the field and he envisages the same for his son Bharadwaj, 10. However the economic difference in their backgrounds i.e., the father and the son's upbringing, is also to be considered. The two worlds are separated by the cultural and economic forces of global capital. The father grew up in the post-independence phase and the son is growing up in the post-globalization phase. For Divakar, the two backgrounds are starkly different and he explains why and how.

Not like our parents ... we studied and came up. So in cases where the infrastructure in more important it became an emotional black mail – the support that came from our parents. Whereas in his case I would always proactively give him infrastructural support. I would always give him information about what the difference of success is, In addition, both of us provide him with information and

... Doing the best in whatever field. I don't think I want him to become a lawyer or an IAS officer. He is either a financial modeler or an automobile designer. In his aim, both of us would help him out. Give him the infrastructural and emotional support. (Divakar, 47, Interview 1999)

A different attitude towards work itself is in terms of result, incentive, and profit-oriented approach. This was lacking in the government jobs and has crept into the new jobs generated by the flow of global capital. The penalty for inefficiency in terms of disincentives or job loss is a constant source of anxiety and motivation. The capitalist principle of profit seen in the immediate gains in terms of incentives, stock options, and bonuses creates the new ethos .

Leichty (2003:3-38, 67) says that more than a 'wage category or pattern of consumption, middle class is a terrain for negotiating the traditional and the modern'. A job is not only a modern way to deal with the issue of work, it is a way to secure the means to 'cultural capital' that is linked to identity. It is also cultural capital in itself, a marker of identity. Cultural capital in that sense is linked to education and one's career or vocation. It is the single most important marker of identity that is publicly insulated from traditional forms of identities like caste. Sudhir, 38, works for a multinational and Swati, 33, works for an automobile firm, and they used to live in a flat with all the modern amenities that were possible. Right from the new automatic washing machine, the new video camera, and television, to the shopping sprees, which both the husband and wife love. They have moved to Pune since and changed jobs. A shopping enthusiast to the core, Sandeep loves to buy anything new that a shop has to offer.

I want to be a good manager. To ensure that you have a good brand equity. Therefore, I look to see if I can handle it and that is how I choose an opportunity. I am professional and so is the company. If I do not perform, they will not pay me. I get sixty per cent of my salary forty per cent is performance based. The moment

my performance goes down they will know it. Every multinational does it and it is percolating down. It is happening in Delhi, Bombay everywhere except the government offices. There is no guarantee for your job.  
(Sudhir, 38, Interview 2000)

Raghav is Sudhir's father who feels that his son works too hard even for the private sector. Raghav, 75, has worked in the private sector and had retired as a general manager. His wife Gayatri, 73, has also worked in the private sector and they have two children.

He is working very hard much more than I used to. Five times harder I think. In our times we did not have to work so hard, because the competition was not there. In a way it's good and bad. I feel, times have changed, opportunities are more. You open Deccan Chronicle and see the number of ads for walk in interview. Now people don't have time for sending an application, set a date for interview. You just take a copy of your CV and attend the interview and go back to your job.  
(Raghav, 70, Interview 2000)

The weekly magazine, *India Today* (1997 Internet Edition) calls the upper middle class- the "middle class millionaires". The upper middle class category of families is a typical global consumer. They could have been consumers in any part of the world- especially North America with the touch of Indianness. Career education for themselves and for their children is now always beyond the borders of the 'welfare state'. The children and the parents carefully plan the careers for years. Planning starts early and the finances are planned as early as when the children start primary school. Later in high school and the 'plus-two' or the junior college, more elaborate planning happens in terms of fees, the kind of college, and the kind of course. It is an interactive effort and sometimes the whole family with the help of friends and the extended family is involved in the process. The upper middle class careers are all among the top paying jobs in the city. Career choices and education are guided by what is considered to be the

“trend” according to the market rather than individual talent or interest. Trend is not necessarily a trivial, spontaneous phase, which dies out, but a well thought over and chosen field, which is guided by the demands of the world economy, media, at the larger level and the encouragement of the teachers, family, and friends at the personal level. In terms of career trends, so far the most common one, especially in A.P., has been to become an engineer or a doctor.

The state-funded institutes support this and encourage education in these areas. Getting an education in these institutes is a lot of hard work but these institutes were also greatly subsidized by the government. Shekar, now 24, was a student in his II year junior college and had big plans for his education. His mother works in an international school in Hyderabad. Now, catching up with him I discover that he is already in the US pursuing a Masters degree in Chemical Engineering with plans for a PhD too. His plans four years ago were to study in the US. Education as cultural capital has to be earned the hard way in order to reap benefits of a prestigious job. Shekar followed a harsh routine to get the best possible career and now, he is working toward a Masters cum PhD from a prestigious University in the US. It's the private property he has earned for himself forever.

I want to write SAT exam after II year exams then after Engineering I plan to go abroad any good university. I get up at 5.00 and until 6.30, I study. I go to college until 3.00 and I come home and study until 9.30, sleep, and get up at 4.30 or 5.00. I want to be more intelligent than the guys in the class. That is something I want. (Shekar, 19, Interview 2000)

In this context the concept of capital- mental, cultural, intellectual- is important. According to Bourdieu (1984) if cultural practices are linked to educational levels and social origins (p.1) then it follows that higher the educational level higher is one's status in society. At least this holds true for the middle class in India for whom education is the biggest decision in the life of an individual. For the middle class the non-ownership of

private property is the lack, which motivates the acquiring of intellectual capital. One's cultural practices, or the 'habitus' enables a certain lifestyle. "Cultural consumption is thus predisposed to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences (p.7)". The point here is that the whole package of one's space or in Bourdieu's language, the 'distinctions' are a "product of the intelligentsia whose effect is to reproduce the symbolic and material interests of the dominant class (Li Puma, 1993:21)". Thus it is the upper middle class and the middle middle class, which has access to the cultural practices due to their social positions, like tutorial classes for the Engineering and Medical Entrance Test. It is they who get into the best of institutes and acquire qualifications to go further up in their chosen fields.

A retired professor travels three hours in the car provided by an institute that tutors students for the Engineering and Medical Entrance Test (EAMCET). These institutes are schools in themselves with special training for the professional courses and exams. The kind of teachers an institute has is important for impressing on new students. Professor Venkat Rao 71, retired from IIT (Indian Institute of Technology) Kharagpur, another premier institute of India, teaches math and physics to junior college students. He travels three hours each day to these institutes. A professional in his career, is treated with extra special care where a car picks him up and drops him to and from work.

As parents these upper middle class respondents' focus on their children is a new phenomenon. They want the best for their children- something, which was not possible with lower incomes. Roshan 45, and Sheela, 40, have two daughters and now live in Bangalore. Roshan works for a software firm.

Best quality education for kids. That is the only motive. We haven't taken any application from other schools. It is now rated among the top 10 schools in the country. It gives individual attention to children. They don't have that crowd in the class. They have 20-25 students in each class. A child's habits, personality, everything they will build- teachers know that. They have fixed chairs in class, you can't put a 26th chair in class. (Roshan, 45, Interview 2000)

Deepika 34, whose parents are older and retired, is an only child and a focus of much attention. She seems to have fought her way around to doing exactly what she wanted even if it meant giving in to the parent's wishes in the beginning of her career. Now she works as a teacher of French in an International school in Mumbai, meant especially for American students living in India on a short-term basis (2-3 years). She has found a niche in the global economy but the aspirations of her mother Leela have not been met despite Deepika earning a good amount and living well in Mumbai now.

We wanted my daughter to do MBBS. She did not, she was not interested. Then she did interior designing and French, English Literature. I wanted her to be in the government services. My son, we wanted him to do engineering but he got into arts after his Intermediate. He changed his field totally. He is into advertising but let's see how he does. (Leela, 70, Interview 1999)

As compared to the lower middle class who have a bachelor's degree all the upper middle class in the study, have a masters and or more. Education is definitely a top priority for the upper middle class too. As to a general profile of the respondents, in terms of education and work, four of the men and only one woman have done the professional four-year Engineering course- a trend typical of the middle class families in the post-independence period. The women work in schools with the highest income for the teachers in the city. The income for these teachers is ten times that of the teachers in the lower middle class area.

One of the retired men was a Managing Director for a private firm, one was a civil servant in the Indian Foreign Service, and one woman was a secretary to the CEO of a private firm.

Careers have been transplanted from a citizen-subject orientation for national development to a professional-subject orientation for self-development. This self as the new focus of the economy, puts consumption as the primary form of identity formation. The upper middle class has definitely moved out of the circuit of government jobs and is in the global market. A previously laid-back government servant transformed into an executive who thinks of him/herself, especially among the upper rungs of the middle class. This person will not just think of future savings but also about a daughter's US education funded from the savings.

The possibilities for making a different career choice- from being just a teacher to a French teacher, from a government section officer to an HR manager in a multinational firm are available now. However, it's the upper middle class and partly the middle middle class, which have the financial capabilities to take up these new jobs. The importance of education and of science as a field of study is predominant even now. The emotional and infrastructural support is willingly given provided the children follow the rules set by the parents. Focused approach whether it is toward the children's education or one's career. As Roshan puts it,

I think first is setting a goal for you. If you do not set a goal of where you want to be and what you achieve you'll be traveling in no direction. Then working hard to achieve that. You need to have a passion to achieve that. And once you use the word passion you cover a lot of things. There is the determination, drive, and sincerity. Sincerity to achieve that goal, honesty to achieve a goal, which will have a lot of value. Money has never been a goal for me. Even today, one puts a goal for 2-3 years, at a personal level and professional level. (Roshan, 45, Interview 2000)

A government job was the most sought after job post-independence and until the globalization phase took over. It is still an important avenue for security in a job because of the pension benefits it offers. Education and work or having a career is a way to secure the means to 'cultural capital', which is linked to identity. Cultural capital is a marker of identity. The middle middle class jobs are similar in the level of prestige they carry to the lower middle class jobs, only better paid ones. The salary is substantially more because of the better education of the respondents. Some of the respondents have a postgraduate level of education amongst the middle middle class. The most important feature in the middle middle class is the government jobs. Almost all the respondents' families were with government jobs. Government jobs with their obvious security are the bedrock of parental aspirations. The future is pretty much taken care of with the pension in the government job. It is the government job, which economically and socially also puts the person in the bracket of a middle middle class.

Ashok Raj, 47, is a principal of an 'aided' school in a slum area. An 'aided' school is a much often used term referring to the aid that the school gets from the government and this takes care of the salaries of the teachers among other things. It is better to work for an aided school than a private school because the latter pays less. He is a graduate who tried his hand at a private firm working as a marketing manager and then as a manager in a local hotel. Ashok Raj works for this school which was started to help the poor families by his father-in-law. For Ashok Raj, the job of a hotel steward was interesting since one got to meet all kinds of people. However, it is the job in the school, which eventually got him the best possible security.

The school has a difficult time getting the students fees since the families cannot always afford to pay it on time. But for him the salaries, which come from the government, take care of their futures and that's the best part about it.

We get government scales. Our future is made. Because I am on a good post. The salary comes from government. I didn't have any other opportunity other than sticking to it. (Ashok Raj, 47, Interview 2000)

But when it comes to their children, a government education, and a similar job was not good enough. For Ashok Raj, who is the only person with a graduate degree in their community, their son Sonu 24, has come a long way. He likes Michael Jordan, skates in the YMCA and likes to work some day in a multinational call center. Ashok Raj had his son study at a private school and his daughter went to a government school. Between the two, the government school paid him a good salary and the private school educated his son better. Raj was a good wage earner as a government servant but not good enough for his son, but again, it pays him to support his son's education but wants his son to work for a private firm. Ashok Raj:

I wanted to put him in Public School. Here in my school, teachers suddenly leave their jobs. The class suffers, children also suffer. I didn't want my son to be at a disadvantage so I put him in a Public School. Even in the public school they have problems. There we can go and complain, here, in our school own we can't because we are the management. I did not want him to go to our school and suffer. (Ashok Raj, 47, Interview 2000)

Ghousia Sultana 37, and Kaleemuddin 45, have four children and live in a three-room house. Ghousia has recently started teaching in a school and Kaleemuddin works in the Education Sector in the Accounts Department. They are originally from Mahboob Nagar. Ghousia has recently started teaching English in a private school

higher education and marriages. Shobha's husband, Kumar, 65, in retrospect respects her for these things and says it with some level of gratitude. Kumar and Shobha have had the best of both worlds in that she has worked in a government job and Kumar worked for a private firm. Between a pensionable job and a private job's salary, both have been materially and socially benefited.

I discouraged her a lot. Once in an office you have to stick to timings, have little time for summer, pongal holidays. It is a blessing in disguise. My wife is a person with a lot of foresight and unless you plan, acquire something you will not have social status. Now I am able to realize it. What ever she has done, it has given us some status. Either in office or in relation's circle or with friends. And the moment you say you work in L & T you are looked at highly. If you say you are section officer in secretariat, you are received highly, and you have a house now, there is nothing like it. (Kumar, 65, Interview 1999)

Another asset that almost everyone has is an education with English as the medium of instruction. Radha 41, and Vishnu 45, are both government employees. She works for the secretariat of the state government and he works for the accountant general's office. Theirs was a love marriage and Vishnu has helped Radha learn her Math and English. They live with extended family in one part of the house. Vishnu turned out to be a devout Gandhian, practicing some of the most difficult values that Gandhiji preached. There are no servants in the house and it is Vishnu who wakes up first to do the work in the kitchen. Since Radha does not keep good health it is Vishnu who does a large part of the household chores. The children too help out and it seems to keep the family together. In lieu of an ascending career in the office Vishnu feels the need to help Radha learn better English.

I see action movies, my intention is that she has to learn good English. Because she is moving in society. It is extremely important, even for her career in her job she has to learn English. (Vishnu, 45, Interview 1999)

The children, however, have not followed the parent's footsteps in terms of getting a government job. Vishnu's son was working to get into an engineering college and now, after four years, he is working too. Their house was an extension of a larger house shared between three families. It had the living, dining, and bedroom all in one room with only the kitchen in a separate area. There have been dramatic changes in the house since my last visit, four years back. The house has a computer in a study area, which is also a formal drawing room. The children are both studying in college and do a lot of online research too. The parents' struggle to get jobs into the state government offices had been a hard one but the struggle is now for the children's education.

She completed her degree after marriage and at home she did not have that much freedom to do everything. She wanted to work since she's intelligent and it was easy for me to guide her. I used to get general knowledge books to her and in fact while cleaning vessels I used to teach her. I refused a job because it did not suit my marital life. We would have been apart. For me, my children's career is more important. If I look at my career then their life will get spoiled. (Vishnu, 45, Interview 1999)

It is a thin line that Vishnu and Radha tread between what they want for themselves, for their children and what they don't want for themselves and for their children. They seemed to be at a crucial stage of making some important decisions.

Like he said I do not want him to go abroad (foreign) or anything. But they should not be doing clerical kind of job either. (Radha, 41, Interview 1999)

The choice of a career is according to the demands of the market and the middle middle class plays to it. The perception is that the best possible job is in computers and not a government job.

Nalini 45, and Maheshwar 53, are also in government employment and all their three children are well settled. When I met the family four years back, the children were struggling with their careers. They have two daughters and a son. The elder daughter is settled in the US and the younger one is in Hyderabad along with the son. The son also owns a car now and is working. The attitude towards work has changed in terms of planning and finding the right course, to getting the right job. Nagamamba was running a part-time business of selling saris to colleagues and friends to make ends meet. An enterprising woman, she is now promoted as accounts officer in the state transport department and drives her own car. Her wish and desire while growing up had been to work in the military.

So I would think how best I can do something for the nation as a person if I am able to change ten people, it is enough. This generation, they want to earn money, more and more. They are very particular of earning money and moral values are less. The previous generation had moral value whatever they earn; they spend some and save some. "If we study this we will earn so much" that motive is there. From sixth class onwards they lay a route for their career. "I should become an engineer or doctor. They are very practical in life. Our generation, parents would think I have to give a lakh for dowry so I do not spend on my daughters studies then I can save that. Our generation thinks, instead of giving her dowry, let me put that money in her studies. So the daughter earns for herself. (Nalini, 45, Interview 1999)

Compared to Nalini is Divakar who is quite forthright about what he wants out of his life. For Divakar, 'making wealth' as he put it is a first goal and a focused effort. This is possible through education and a good job.

But I should also say this that in a way he (his son) is luckier than me and my wife. Mainly because his environment, i.e. we are better endowed than our parents are. Therefore, for us who came without inheriting any wealth. There is no inclination to make money in any underhand way. Whereas he (his son) will stay in a better endowed situation compared to us and he can ask for anything. (Divakar, 47, Interview 1999)

Nalini on the other hand has fought against odds so that she could do what is right instead of what the trend is. Her outcome has been that her daughter has a job in the US after finishing her engineering and MS and her son works as a marketing manager in a multinational in Hyderabad. For Nalini, the means might be more important but the end is the same- a job that is the best in the market.

I chose my daughter's college as Mahaboobia (government college for girls) not him (husband). Because I thought we are anyway spending on tuitions so let's not spend on college fees. I wanted to send her to a government college. We need a college and she should be taught there, if she is not she will anyway go to tuitions. So I convinced her. I did not force her into it. I explained it to her. .. he (husband) has this notion of male female thing, he has that. You should be like a mustard tree. A mustard tree is a small tree and if it grows near a large banyan tree it will appear small. You will have an inferiority complex if you move around with people who are bigger better than you are. Because of the inbuilt confidence, we learn new things better without problems. I told my daughter about government schools when she was joining. I said they will have furniture but you will build up your confidence. Even when they stand beside a huge tree, they would not feel bad about it. (Nalini, 45, Interview 1999)

Being middle class, one is constantly checking on the different values available to follow. One is conscious of the fact that one's values are changing because the economic conditions are changing. One is constantly trying out or negotiating a cultural space - a space of values, ideas, goods, and practices. According to Leichy (2003:15-16), the middle class is situated in an economy where resources are unequally distributed. In the context of modern Nepal, Leichy says that "...the cultural practices of the middle class disguise its class privileges... behind seemingly non-economic rhetoric of honor, achievement, and so on. ... (T)he middle class emerges as a never - ending cultural project that is simultaneously at odds with itself and with its class others". There is a certain lack that a middle class always feels which he/she must

fulfill. In the process the middle class person is making efforts to get rid of one identity and form another one. This self-construction of identity enables certain ideas to be thought out and disables some. This is the discursive space with freedom for self-formation. One is trying to not be like the 'villager' and at the same time trying to 'modernize'. And in such a situation, the capital for self-formation is made possible through one's work, one's choice of career. This becomes a strong basis for identity. Being in government service, doing a teacher's job or working in a bank are ways to modernize. These signify definite and possible ways to modernize. In addition, an indicator of being modern is having a stable income and be able to educate one's children and not give up one's tradition. The middle middle class jobs serve as labels to modernity, to 'develop' along with the nation.

Shobha did a government job, earned well and she has been able to continue with the traditional lifestyle. She was able to get an income but also followed tradition by paying for an expensive wedding. Being middle class makes possible the most significant of cultural negotiations. The possibility of keeping some part of the tradition and taking on some part of the modern. It is the economic condition, which allows for the either one –the traditional or the modern- to take precedence.

I achieved a lot because of my job. Financially it would have been a problem. Even though my daughter was not given a dowry, I spent five lakhs for the wedding. Everything for the weddings was there in the house, minus the gold, it cost me five lakhs. (Shobha, 55, Interview 1999)

Careers for the lower middle class are in the private sector and that sets them apart from the government employees. The income difference and the difference in the pay structure is quite stark and this is crucial for security. Ramesh, 43, works in two

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places and is trying to buy a flat. I met Ansuya, 35, and Ramesh, through a teacher from a school in a poorer neighborhood. They live in flats in Nimboliadda – a residential neighborhood housing mostly the middle and the labor class. Ansuya stays at home.

They have two children. They own a fridge, TV, almirah and all these are housed in the first room, which are also the bedroom, drawing, and dining room.

I studied from Open University, did B.Com. First, I did stenography then I also did Accounts. So I got interested in a job and I continued. There is no free time. I work part-time also. I wanted to do a government job. I wrote exams but didn't get it. I wrote BSRB ( Banking Services and Revenue Board), APPSC (Andhra Pradesh Public State Commission). I couldn't get a job, so I joined a private company. (Ramesh, 43, Interview 2000)

One always finds a justification for the loss that is a government job. Not having a government job is a severe blow to an educated person coming from minimum means but Lalita 35, and her husband have found their answers.

For me teacher's job was best. Otherwise, there is no use thinking of what we don't have and feeling bad. First when we came here, he wanted to do a government job, later he joined private job. Right now there are no vacancies and the ones that are there are getting filled up from inside. But now as long as we work we will do a private job and we will be happy. The government employees don't have any interest in their work. In private, you are more responsible. You are more alert also. We are alert, and careful to make mistakes. If we work well, we will get promotions. It is easy to move up in a private office. And if you are computer trained and have English knowledge then you can go anywhere. (Lalita, 35, 1999)

The symbolic capital is a missing piece among the lower middle class who lack the surplus to own it or to work towards gathering it. Symbolic capital in terms of higher education, hobbies to cultivate, like music, theatre, expensive tastes like branded furniture or branded clothes. Unlike the lower middle class, it is the upper middle class

for whom, it is all about symbolic capital. Bourdieu's notion plays itself out for Deepika 34, who is a single woman. She works as a teacher at a school. Having met her after four years, a lot seemed to have changed. With French, Architecture and English Literature in her 'highly qualified' repertoire, Deepika is 'culturally' highly equipped in Bourdieu's words or is high on cultural capital.

I was always interested in interiors. It is interesting to create something from scratch. I liked that aspect. I have done a diploma in interiors and have worked with an architect for three years. Then I studied French at the Alliance Francaise. I am teaching French- history and literature and have moved out of Hyderabad. I almost finished an MA in English from Annamalai University but I did not clear the final papers. (Deepika, 34, Interview 2005)

Symbolic capital is of value when it enhances the material aspects of life in general. Pramila, 44, is a schoolteacher in a slum who loves to read, likes to set up a library and a crèche for little children. Her passion for reading can be seen as a cultural capital, has not taken her places. Pramila is also content with her life. She lives with her only daughter who is disabled and her husband, who has retired as a peon in a government office. Pramila has distaste for the popular and commercial. She got interested in Hindi and gave exams. This school is an RSS (Rashtriya Swayam Sevak) organization and she joined as a Hindi teacher here. For Pramila, the respect that she gets in school is her biggest draw on her career. It compensates for many other things that are obviously missing. The social status that is her biggest draw in the school is her symbolic capital. The material benefits of such a capital are hard to see but the intangible benefits are all too clearly visible.

This school is good, the committee is good. It is according to our Hindu culture. They have a morning prayer. They study Bhagwat Gita, Vemanna Padyaloo (Telugu poems). The salaries are not too good. It is not government scale. The

environment is good. If we want to teach our children, lead them on a good path, this is a good place. Disciplining is good. After joining this, I have not tried any other place. I liked this and I have 20 years service. I will be 40 years now. Now I am used to this and the school community has a good impression about me, now for however long I work it will be here. After that, I plan to do something on my own. (Pramila, 48, Interview 1999)

In the present context, the careers of the middle class have undergone tremendous changes along with the economic changes of globalization and liberalization in India. These changes are an index of the workings of 'global capital' in general. The middle class is the beneficiary of this change and their jobs are an indicator.

The private property owned is transformed to educational qualifications which 'becomes' one's property again. It is an interesting point of departure to understand the notion of the middle class itself. Here the upper caste is attempting to 'modernize' through the colonial project of education. This has been one of the markers of middle classness.

Money, income, access to money/income provides the basis for the social consciousness. On the other hand, as Bourdieu (1986:253) would have it, "the middle class are committed to the symbolic". Alternatively, the social consciousness says that it is one kind of 'work' that provides 'money' and hence success. Being successful, making it big, being better than now, is what provides succor. It is with money, one buys things; with money, one possesses commodities. The reason for money is consumption, is culture itself. On the other hand, the basis for the good life is in a good job and a good income. The rest of it comes on its own accord.

The lower middle class worldview is within the smaller radius of home and work. They have a limited view of things. The larger community for them is the circle of relatives and friends, significant others.

## Finances

By finances, one means the income management of a given household. The expenditure patterns are of import here. It encompasses the whole gamut of income planning. There are obvious overlaps into the areas mentioned above, viz., shopping, leisure, and fees. For a household the cash that is part of a monthly pay packet is what runs the economy of the house. Typically, it is spent on the daily consumption basket including food and clothes. It might include rent for a house, bills for the electricity, telephone, gas, newspapers. So, apart from this mundane regularity of income patterns is the pattern of expenditure pertaining to the social aspects. This is the *dépense*, which has significance in the present context.

The upper middle class is the epitome of the global consumer, an all out consumer who looks for brand names, shops only in high-end stores, and has long since given up getting things tailored. Expenses are typically on shopping, eating out, and traveling for leisure. The fees, groceries are not even a part of their finance planning. The major expense is towards the house, then on saving for children's education. For the upper middle class, money and the possibilities that come with it are a luxury. For Roshan and Sheela, the matter of monthly expenditure cannot be discussed because it is awkward. It's embarrassing to talk of numbers. Therefore, they have not even thought it out in detail.

I have not calculated it. I have never done it. The major part is running the house. Fair amount goes towards savings then education, then eating out. Most of it goes into shopping on an ad hoc basis. We like something we buy it. But not always. (Roshan, 45, Interview 2000)

In addition, the next big amount that they want to spend their money on is something for the house. Finances in that sense are beyond the mundane aspects of sustenance and money takes on a symbolic form in terms of commodity purchases. It is the thing that signifies, which is bought rather than the thing itself.

The incomes have gone up for the middle class in general and so have their expenditure patterns. In the phase before globalization, the incomes were low and the market was not as flooded with 'things' or commodities. If the previous generation looked at saving for a government job and a good education, this generation looks at saving for the daughter's education abroad and also an extravagant wedding too. As Roshan would have it, the more they can afford the better they can save and spend. Just like Roshan is Sudhir, 38, who loves to spend and looks at avenues for expenditure. Saving for him is incidental while living to eat and shop is the focus of a lot of leisure activity.

If I get some amount I put it in savings. But I never save every month. Every month there's something. There is a problem with a car or I might like to buy something. It will cost us a few thousands. We do splurge and that is why we do not save. Today time is limited, and if I come at 9:00 my mind is full, if I come at 5:00 my mind is free to go shopping or movie. Then there is no limit. Because of constraint of time we feel we should enjoy ourselves and not put constraints. (Sudhir, 38, Interview 1999)

Some of the major expenses for these families in any given month are groceries, children's fees, a new piece of furniture, a new electronic gadget, gold jewellery etc.

For Debroy 60, who has retired from an insurance company, the most important expense in any month for the past few years has been the children's fees. It has cost him

sometimes a whole month's salary and more from his savings. They as a family have stopped going to their native place in Kolkatta because it costs them a lot.

For my son's education. He is doing three courses at the same time. Every month his expenditure is Rs.7000 he is doing MSc from Osmania, PG Diploma from Hyderabad Central University and MCA from Madhurai Kamaraj University. He goes on the bike to the university and the other expense is for his books, his computer. He brought the Pentium II. (Debroy, 60, Interview 1999)

For Deepti 34, Debroy's daughter, the expenses have gone up since she started working in a school. Deepti is a Montessori trained teacher and has been working for the last ten years now. Meeting her after four years revealed that she has moved on to a better international style school where she earns a better salary than before.

Especially on my dresses. I have to be more conscious when I go out. Before it was not there. Because I was not working anywhere. Now I feel even my colleagues are wearing good clothes so even I have to wear. In addition, during teacher training, the faculty told us, that we have to be well dressed. Because the children are impressionable, they are very conscious of their teachers. They act like them; the teacher is a role model. (Deepti, 34, Interview 1999)

Finances and money take on a different meaning for her because she is spending a good amount on herself. For her father though, money is a scarce commodity, which is expended wisely and sparingly. A man who has worked in private sector all his life has learnt to live in a limited income, save, and buy houses and land as an investment for the future.

My father is least bothered about moving out of this house. We have got a plot in Saidabad. My mother longs for big house, my father has the money but he doesn't like to take loans and build houses. He is very simple. You see that fridge- it is 20 years, old. It is in good condition. All our friends have got new ones in the recent exchange offer but my father is not bothered. (Deepti, 34, Interview 2000)

A change in attitude is right there in the next generation and the children more than endorse it. According to Deepti:

My brother says openly that his wife will not listen and he will have to live separately and not in this house. She will want to go to cinema, to a hotel, buy good clothes, marriages, friends, all of them are costly things. My father is like that -son goes on Hero Honda and he goes on cycle. (Deepti, 34, Interview 2000)

A comfortable lifestyle raises the expectations in life and future for the next generation. For Nalini, 45, this is seen in her reflecting on the two different attitudes toward money, her's, and her children's. Nalini, has worked in different departments of the state secretariat and is now promoted to a high-level job. In order to make ends meet she at one time also had a part-time business of selling saris. Now that business is run by an aunt who needs the money and Nalini herself is well off. Her son works for a multinational company and drives his car and Nalini too drives her own car.

Definitely there is a difference in this generation and ours. They want to earn money, more and more. They are very particular of earning money and moral values are less. The previous generation had moral values. Whatever they earned they spent some and saved some. They would live within their limits and not lose their morality. They were very practical in life. For the present generation their aim was to earn money. It's everything. In our times money was one of the means to live life but its influence was very less. (Nalini, 45, Interview 2000)

The difference in spending habits is noticeable across the three generations in this family. Nalini recounts the difference in her attitude toward money with her mother's and then to her daughter's attitudes. Her mother's generation only thought about saving, which is in contrast to her daughter and son's ideas who only believe in spending.

I do not put it in shares. Our incomes are fixed no, we do not get any sudden profits. I may go for another plot. If it's a small amount, I will definitely spend that amount on a consumer item. Demands are from many parts. The car is for my girl. The children do not express it before me and when I am not there they discuss it. (Vishnu, 45, Interview 1999)

Vishnu, tries hard to live by what he believes i.e. simple living high thinking. He does not have servants in the house and helps with the housework. Even though items like refrigerators, vacuum cleaners are for him a status symbol and not a requirement he had to give in to the pressure of buying a refrigerator. He believes that if one is not able to do one's work it is his/her weakness. This belief takes him through most of his decisions. However, his wife may not agree with him in some matters. For her buying the usual gold and jewelry for her daughter (which Vishnu is against) is her idea of a good investment.

He does not like buying gold. But for my daughter I would like to buy. My son keeps telling me -get a car so that all of you can come and visit me. (Radha, 41, Interview 1999)

The fridge is not my option it's her option. I do not believe in buying a fridge. It become a status symbol. I don't find the utility of that article. May be when I am in my 70's. It has show value. I prefer iron to gold. It's built our nation. For some people the fridge, TV are necessities, not for everyone. For the middle class it's become a necessity. If I buy a car, it's a status symbol. (Vishnu, 45, Interview 1999)

For a man living in the twenty first century Vishnu is a non-shopper, an epitome of an anti consumer.

Simple living. Necessity means a two-wheeler. I cannot drop my child to school without it. And to her (Radha's) office or my office. So that's a necessity. A fridge is not a necessity. We work together so I know what the real necessities are. We just use it to put leftover food in. But right now we are making use of it. And I realize it is useful. My cousin's son is in hospital, so everything has to be prepared for two days in advance or else we cannot manage. We get the vegetables, cut

them, and store in the fridge. The fancy things influence my son. I told him should the boy sitting next to you feel bad about not owning a bag like you? (Vishnu, 45, Interview 1999)

Commodity aesthetics, as envisaged by Haug (1986:16-17), suggests that at a certain stage in the development of capitalism it is the exchange value which takes on a character of its own and the use-value remains a mere illusion. This leads to the simultaneous development of a mere appearance of use-value. This means that the media starts to influence one's thinking where the appearance of an object takes on meanings, which is more than its mere use-value. The appearance of the object and the real object are detached from each other at the level of advertisements and the intervention of the media. For the middle class in general, this affect molding or the 'civilizing work of society' according to Norbert Elias (Appadurai, 1997:81) happens when the concept of appearance takes on a new meaning. Thus, what looks nice or what appears beautiful depends on what the media says. Alternatively, the industry of 'affect molding'- the media- takes over from previous, traditional albeit, important modes of influence like the extended family and the larger community. In the context of the lower middle class and the middle middle class, this is a crucial move to become consumers in more complex and modern ways. Also, consumption becomes the civilizing work of society.

A gradual move towards the physical and aesthetic appearance of the house is noticeable amongst the middle middle class families. This is lacking amongst the lower middle classes. For Ashok Raj, 47, the house, from being an office for their school is turning into a home. So their expenses are put into building an air-conditioned computer room with carpets, getting work done on the muddy floor of the living room that served

as the office for the school. The other expense is the new bike for their son to go to his computer class and their daughter's impending wedding.

We got a showcase and computer table made for our son. We bought a motorbike for Rs.15, 000. I want to get the flooring done in this house. I want to decorate the house. I have a lot of plans. All these years we used to have the school office in this drawing room. (Ashok Raj, 47, Interview 2000)

Traditionally from the moneylender's caste, Suresh is another anti-shopper. Suresh 33, and Rajashri 27, come from a long line of moneylenders and business caste. They believe that the best way to spend money is by investing some and spending the interest that is got on the investment. It is the ideal form of expenditure of money. Money for them is not just a scarce commodity but also something that should and is meant to grow. If it doesn't then it spells doom. Consequently, money spent on a sofa or a beautiful carpet is money lost. Nevertheless, a visit to a fair, which sells commodities according to their budget, like a small wall hanging, or a sari, which one wears and wears out, is acceptable.

For Ghousia, 37, and Kaleemuddin, 45, the biggest cut in any month is towards their children's private school fees. A working couple, they strongly believes in private schools despite the hardships they face.

Here we spend mostly on our children's fees. They all go to private schools. The government schools are not good. I have three daughters and one son. (Ghousia, 37, Interview 2000)

For Venkat Rao, the long bachelorhood helped in saving for the children's education and for their daughter's jewellery. Vaidehi, 59, his wife, thinks that all has been worked out well in terms of finances. And the finances go toward consumption of an engineering career for the son and get the daughter married, the coexistence of the

modern and the traditional at the same moment in time. The gendered character of such aspirations is still a strong belief among the people in general.

In Kharagpur, he (her husband-Rao) accumulated much. And because ours is a late marriage, he was alone, there were savings. Our main target now is education. My son is screened for IIT. Education is more important for the boy, and for the girl jewellery is there. His (her husband) mentality is calm and cool and plans everything. He never stops me from spending and I never exceed my limits. (Vaidehi, 59, Interview 2000)

For Hajira 20, and her sister Aliya 22, young girls yet to be married and a salary to boast, their typical expense is clothes and shopping for themselves. But the shopping for all these families is in the older and inexpensive shops, which sell material and not much of expensive readymade stuff. Sometimes a movie and eating out is also thrown in when the whole family is in the mood. In that sense 'dépense' or expenditure is situated in the traditional norms of the festival.

May be on clothes. It's expensive, whether in old city or here. We go and shop anytime, for id, for some function. Its different for Idd. It is not definite (planned). If we are in the mood we go for shopping. (Hajira, Interview 2000)

For the upper middle class the monthly expenses are typically on shopping, eating out, and traveling. The fees, groceries are not even a part of their financial planning.

The lower middle class earn under Rs.10, 000 per month. In the ten households of the respondents, twelve of the respondents are teachers, four are clerks, two are salesmen, two are homemakers, and three are students. All of the families live in poorer neighborhoods. Of the total income, the most part goes into the rent of the flats Then a part goes into groceries and other monthly expenses. Savings, if at all, go into buying or getting a house or a flat built. Typically, one fourth goes towards groceries, another fourth into the rent, another into shopping and the rest is saved or goes into the

children's fees. The precarious nature of finances for the lower middle class puts a hold on their expenses and their savings. The necessities are the most important expense. Any extra expense in any month will put a burden on them leading to possibly taking debts. Any expense other than those outlined above is a burden. A visit to the native village, a wedding in the family, a sudden sickness can lead them to taking loans from family or from the small time loan-giver in the neighborhood who loans money on a small rate of interest. Each of the families has priorities in terms of where a large part of the family income is spent. It is not a uniform pattern. For Pramila, Satyavati, Swati, Giri, Santosh, and Lalita it is toward the rent of the flats that they live in. It's a fourth of their income.

For Ghousia and Kaleemuddin, who have their own house, the most important expense is their children's fees. All four children go to private schools. Although the schools are not the best or not expensive, a third of the income goes into it. For Satyavati, it is in building a house and the wedding expense of her only daughter

For Giri 19, and Santosh 21, students living out of money sent by their parents, their main expense is in the rent, fees, books, and buying vegetables so they are not forced to eat out. For Lalita, the month-to-month survival is an issue and so savings are not even in the picture. When they start to save, it will be for their daughter who lives with an aunt in the village. With both of them working, it is hard to take care of their daughter.

For Pramila, an ongoing expense is their daughter's medicines and hospital visits. A problem with her ribs has kept her from growing to her normal height. To be sure, financial investments are made for a future consumption and here the consumption patterns of the middle class are typically grounded in a varied pattern reflecting the

variations in the incomes. Likewise is the pattern of consumption when it comes to the next category of shopping when we come face-to-face with the commodity form.

### Shopping

Consumption, as a cultural process has many aspects to it and one of them is shopping. According to Bataille, culture is really the history of the principle of *dépense*, responsible for the 'constructive' dimension manifest in the material form. It is the expectation of the expressive in production, manifest in the material, which is culture.

Consumption as a symbolic practice of society is a given. What has changed in the process of shopping is played out quite elaborately and imaginatively in the crossover lines between the market, the middle class, and religion. It is to be noted that globalisation as a process of economic change depicted in the increased growth rates in the last decade in India, belies the real stories of the millions who are not a part of the process. Religion, religious ritual, festival, all a part of culture have been usurped by the market and employed in a widespread manner to serve capital and the process of accumulation. An interesting point made by Holt (2004), is that ads create myths through storytelling (224). These myths address issues and contradictions of the economy and society. They are linked to the identities through storytelling. This crossover between economy and culture, makes for the production of value (Rajagopal, 2002) through the production of desire (Goux, 1990).

The middle class are the real consumers of such a market driven consumption upon which the ideology of the consumption is woven through storytelling by means of the various media. This brings us to the crux of the matter, namely, the transformation of the citizen subject into a consumer subject. This transformation is readable in the new

forms of consumption that are being reworked and enabled through market strategy made obvious through the ads. The bases of all capitalist enterprise today in India are the 200-300 million classes. The contradictions of a traditional lifestyle bordering on frugality and the contemporary ethic of *dépense* (expenditure) are resolved upon the pivot that is the middle class. This is done in a major way through ads and brand marketing. The quoted brand names have become icons in a still evolving industry.

According to Holt (2004:6), "Iconic brands provide extraordinary identity value because they address the collective anxieties and desires of a nation... (the) self-understanding and aspirations are felt as intensely personal quests". These are shared by a wide share of a nation's populace "because people are constructing their identities in response to the same historical changes that influence the entire nation". Thus, some of the major brands, which the upper middle class devours in its shopping sprees, represent a value of a well-dressed family that has a value of a world citizen attached to it.

The software professional is an example of the elite section of the middle class. This section devours the idea of being global in a thorough way as is clear from the following description by Roshan 45, and Sheela 40. Roshan and Sheela have moved out of the older city area to a better area a few years back and now have moved to Bangalore due to a job transfer. Roshan has a Masters in Organizational Development and Sheela has a Masters in social work. Both are successful in their careers and love their jobs. Shopping and watching the television is their 'family time' or quality time spent with the children.

We do a lot of ad hoc shopping. Because readymade is already, there you just have to go and pick it up. If it catches your eye, it has sophistication and elegance. Normally I go for whatever the latest trends are. We look for brands here also. Like Ginny and Johnny, Planet Kids. Children, it is driven by what you like instantaneously. Few are from ads but most of them are what you like instantly. If we like it we buy normally, you buy one, but if you like it you buy three or four. The latest now is Color Plus. But on a given day, a shop will have multiple

options, you pick up those. It could be Van-Heusen, Color Plus, and Peter England. (Roshan, 45, Interview 2000)

If Roshan and Sheela think the stores are the shopper's paradise then there is Sudhir for whom, buying anything new in the market holds fascination by itself. Sudhir 38, is an engineer and his wife Swati 33, works as a marketing executive in an auto dealership. They have a five-year-old daughter and they live in a flat. Sudhir is a retailer's delight who loves to shop.

My parents are different. We spend more because more avenues are there for spending. If I did not have a credit card, I would not have spent. In addition, when I go to a store, I do not buy things once a month. All through the month, we buy. But you have fresher things. When it gets over, I go and buy so we do not feel the need to stock the perishables. And like good consumers we help companies get richer. I will never say no to a new product. Both my parents are retired and so money is limited. So their saving is small so they will not splurge they might not even make a telephone call if they want to talk to the neighbor. They will go up to the house and speak to them. May be I will start thinking like them when I get to their age. Their saving habits are in provident funds and mutual funds. If you have a lot of money, you will have an extravagant life. If you do not, then you will live frugally within your means; which means that they do not have too much money. (Sudhir, Interview 1999)

For Corrigan, (1997:63) leisure retailing is less gender marked. Mundane shopping is still a female space, but playful shopping has become mixed. With the above respondents, retailing has little to do with gendered differences. Sandeep buys incessantly and enjoys it. One wonders if this idea about gender retailing itself is mixed and the lines for gender retailing are getting blurred.

The lower middle class shopped during and only for the festival time. Their 'shopping periodicities' were around specific times of the year including the special celebratory "functions" like weddings and other ritual and rites of passage. In that sense,

there is the strictly basic, need-based shopping. This need-based shopping however is highly symbolic unlike Bourdieu's assumption that the symbolic is missing in the lower classes. (p.253) For Bourdieu, as one climbs the class ladder the symbolic becomes stronger. "...the inversion of the relationship between spending on food and clothing, and generally, on substance and on appearance, as one moves from the working class is committed to the symbolic". Shopping during the 'habitual' cycles of the annual festivals is highly symbolic as in the religious meaning and import is symbolic. This is reflected in the amount of money that is spent by a family, which is sometimes twice as much as a given month's income. This is because the 'dépense' or expenditure at these times is habitual and repetitive because it happens in cycles each year, along with the traditional festival. There is no escape from expenditure during religious festivals and a household would go to the extent of taking a loan if necessary to buy the usual clothes and foodstuff for a festival. This is to say that expenditure is part of symbolic consumption patterns, which are repetitive and habitual. (Appadurai,1997:67-68)

Satyavati 48, and Sirisha 22, mother and daughter, share extreme economic situations. For all purposes, the family appears to be a lower middle class one. They live in a one-bed room flat. The bathroom is shared with other tenants on the same floor. Satyavati worked as a teacher in the school for sometime and her husband was a security guard in a government office. However, her daughter Sirisha is studying to be an engineer and wants to work in the top-most cadres of a government office. Her shopping is in the areas like, Ameerpet and Koti and not Abids. The latter is a high-end category and the former offer middle range category of items. They are neither too expensive nor too cheap. Sirisha being the only daughter is the focus of both the parents' expectations and aspirations and they do not deny her anything.

For festivals, birthdays I shop; my mother is never interested in Shopping. I feel for exhibition we should look at things and find out what has come into the market. She says when we are not going to buy why we should we look. I say when we are free we can look; she needs to be forced to look at stuff. For dresses I go, for saris she comes. Recently I bought a Walk Man. There was an advertisement for Kalanjali and the dress I had liked. We went there and the cost was Rs.6000/- we came back without buying. It was very expensive. We thought it is not worth spending 6000/- for a dress. For shopping, we go only to Koti; and I prefer Ameerpet after Koti. I feel it is a good standard place to shop. We have been to the Great Mall of Hyderabad. In Shopper's Stop, I feel rates are high and taxes will be high. The quality is same as Koti but the price is higher. (Sirisha, 22, Interview 1999)

Therefore, the mother ventures till the seller's house to buy her saris and is done with her shopping which is never more than a few hundred rupees. Sirisha, on the other hand has ventured to buy the most expensive of the dresses in the upscale areas of Hyderabad.

The upper middle class and the middle middle class, however, do shop outside of the typical, habitual, festival times. Shopping for the lower middle class during these times is also a case of emptying one's cache of savings, if at all there are any. Alternatively, savings are especially meant for spending during the festival time.

Shopping for household items is a family affair, sometimes involving the extended/joint family. An item is bought because of a need, but the process of purchase is usually a long drawn one. As Lalita and her husband say:

These moulded plastic chairs are from Nampally furniture store. My brother said the rate is also cheap. If we have to buy, we take his advice. I go for my saris with my sister in law. She knows the area very well. Also because she is the eldest. (Lalita, 35, Interview 1999)

The lower middle class buy in shopping areas, which offer cheaper and less durable articles. Nampally is one such area situated near the old city. For Appadurai, "consumption leans toward habituation through repetition. The principle reason for this

is that the consumption, in all social contexts, is centered on what Mauss (1973) called 'the techniques of the body.' (Appadurai, 1997:67). "...the techniques of the body...need to become social disciplines, part of some habitus, free of artifice or external coercion in order to take on their full power (p.63)". By techniques of the body, he means the style of clothing, food, hairstyles, etc. These techniques closest to the body acquire uniformity through habituation. The bodily techniques are in that sense bound up strongly with the ritual practices of festivals where all these techniques play out themselves. A festival calls for new clothes, special food, and a head bath and this is bound up strongly with the traditional norms strictly followed by the whole household. Consumption hence has always been a part of the ceremonies and social life in India.

Households that spend more on festivals, whether as contributions to the village or in private celebrations, receive tangible private returns. They obtain higher social status, gain access to larger networks through which they get lower prices on food and more invitations to meals. Rao (2000:23) wonders, "if festival participation increases a household's ability to cope with shocks". His data says "that on an average a village family spends 15 per cent of its annual income on festivals. In the harsh context of rural village life where social networks are important mechanisms for survival and mobility, festival participation helps build and sustain networks". The same community networks survive in the urban areas. One can say that the symbolic nature of expenditure during festival times and other rituals irrespective of class position is present even in the lower classes in the urban areas of India.

According to Baudrillard (1998:75-76), it is consumption that stabilizes capitalism. In Baudrillard's words "needs are produced as elements of a system and not as a relation between an individual and an object... needs and consumption are in fact an organized extension of productive forces". His suggestion is that we consume an

object not for its own concrete nature but we purchase the ideas behind the objects for social ends. We are in the realm of ideas and signs here; social differentiation of the objects through signs is the important point here. The purpose of the objects is to communicate. Baudrillard sees consumption as another logical step in the development of capitalism. "Production and consumption are one and the same grand logical process in the expanded reproduction of the productive forces and of their control". So not only do you serve the system by producing, you also serve it by consuming, consumption is essentially communication of signs and social differentiation. Objects and material goods (things) are not the object of consumption. They are not the purpose of consumption; they are the object of needs and the satisfaction of needs.

To become an object of consumption, an object must first become a sign. It must become external to a relationship that it now signifies. It can be consumed in relation to other objects that exist alongside it. It becomes "personalized" through all other sign-objects that give it a meaning derived out of a difference, not for its practical use value. The apparatus of advertising suggests that the rational order of production must go on and must not be disturbed. The contradiction must not disturb the order of production. In order to be part of the system of production, for the system to go on, it should be 'personalized'. It should be connected to the people.

The 'unproductive' modes of expenditure open up spaces for understanding transgressive forms of conduct. This is hard to rationalize into an economic scheme, in a narrow sense. One can look at 'dépense' as strictly expenditure or disposing of surplus. An average Indian middle class household coming from a history of modest means of sustenance, therefore a life of austerity undergoes the lived experience of 'lack' at one time or another. This is reflected in the development narrative after India's independence focusing on the principles of saving and investment. Modern forms of

consumption -by people who have survived on the borders of the economy and now experience higher income levels- can be looked at as excessive or transgressive forms of conduct.

Bataille explains this in terms of the extra energy of the system. In economic terms, the surplus or the extra energy is lost via consumption. The choice of expenditure of this energy is always through extravagance, through consumption. The paradox according is that the whole system is involved in dealing with the surplus.

Accumulation, surplus, and consumption are the logic of economic systems prevalent today. Instead of the focus on production, the economies are involved in generating surplus and generating in order to expel the surplus.

For Goux (1996:202), the problem of understanding the workings of capitalism is by deciphering the workings of production of desire. For Goux, production is always complemented the production of desire. So economic value lies in the intensity of desiring and not in the production of needs. The production of needs is the basis of capitalism for Baudrillard and according to Goux; it is the production of desire that adds economic value in the final instance.

People like Sheela buy only from a certain store and prefer a certain label. Likewise, Sirisha, shops only in certain areas of the city and not where Sheela shops. Clearly, this difference in preferences is attributable to, first the economic viability and second to the ability to read the sign system through the advertisements and magazines like Sheela does. To be sure, the reading of the signs, is not limited to the upper middle class only, it is the whole population except those below the poverty line who is the focus of the market. There are stores for all levels of economic strata and the market caters to all of them.

The production of desire is the focus of the whole economy and profit generation and accumulation is the only criteria for the process to go on.

Corrigan(1987:2) citing to Campbell, says that the industrial revolution necessarily entailed a *simultaneous* (italics in original) revolution in production and consumption: just as making money came to be seen as an end in itself, so consumption of goods came to be seen as an end in itself, both of these represent breaks from tradition. In traditional societies, particular patterns of 'proper' consumption could be learned, but in modern societies, a general orientation to consuming is acquired.

Campbell contends that, "just as the Protestant Ethic provided the spirit of production, Romanticism, with its cult of expressive individual, was central in providing the spirit of consumption. If the working class were fundamental to the development of production, readers of novels were fundamental to the development of consumption".

For Campbell, the media has been the force behind the development of consumption. The move towards the aesthetic beauty of a house happens through the media. The shopping that sets off the consumption routine takes on the interiors of the house.

### Interiors

The first and foremost feature of consumption, most visible to the eye is the house and the interiors in the house. 'A house becomes a home because of the people who live in it' –an oft heard phrase which resonates with the Bourdieuvian understanding of how appearance is a symbolic thing for the middle class. For Bourdieu (1984), as one climbs the social ladder, the symbolic becomes stronger and so for the labor class it is minimal or nonexistent. Bourdieu however disregards this 'dépense' of

the lower middle class and the poor who in India spend almost 15 per cent (Rao 2000:21) of their annual income on ceremonies or festivals that are a marker of the symbolic of the highest order. According to Woodward (2003:5) in the context of Australian modern middle class consumption, a home seems to be the most important and expensive investment on the part of a family. It is a symbol of modernity, middle class status, and affluence in Australia. In the Indian context, the same holds true except that for the poor and the lower middle class, owning a home may not be a marker of affluence as much as a mark of pride and prestige. Consumption is visible not just in the interiors of the houses but also in other expenses because it is the appearance or the “first impression” which matters the most. As one climbs the social ladder, expenditure on the superficial increases and the money spent on food based subsistence purposes decreases. This is obvious from the following data in Table 5, by the NSSO (1989) (National Sample Survey Organization) in India. The table gives details of consumption expenditures per month in rupees, collected at different points in time. The periods of collection are called rounds that were conducted at regular intervals and the numbers are money spent in rupees.

*Table 5: Consumption Expenditure in rupees for Rural and Urban areas*

Rural Areas					
Expenditure in rupees.	1972-73 (27 <sup>th</sup> round)	1977-78 (32 <sup>nd</sup> round)	1983 (38 <sup>th</sup> round)	1986-87 (42 <sup>nd</sup> round)	1992 (-)
Cereals	40.58	32.78	32.30	26.79	65
All food	72.92	64.34	65.58	65.67	161
Non food	27.08	35.66	34.52	34.33	37

Urban Areas					
Expenditure in Rupees	1972-73 (27 <sup>th</sup> round)	1977-78 (32 <sup>nd</sup> round)	1983 (38 <sup>th</sup> round)	1986-87 (42 <sup>nd</sup> round)	1992 (-)
Cereals	23.32	20.45	19.41	14.88	59
All Food	64.69	59.99	59.12	57.07	224
Non Food	35.51	40.01	40.88	42.93	399

Source: *Sarvekshana* (1989): Journal of NSSO Vol.12 no.4. 42<sup>nd</sup> round Jan 86- July 87

The period between 1986 and 1992 according to the table shows that there has been a dramatic shift in expenditure patterns in the non-food category from Rs.42.93 to Rs.399, an almost ten-fold increase. The table shows that money spent on non-food items has slowly gone up over the years implying that it is expenditure on the food items that has decreased and that on non-food items has gone up considerably. The non-food items include things like tobacco, pan, shoes, consumer durables etc. The NSSO provides data, which gives insight into the foundations of a consumer revolution waiting to happen in India. In that sense, the expenditure patterns were already shifting to the domains not related strictly to subsistence routines.

In that sense globalization has been about economic change and social change. Chandra Mukherji (Appadurai, 1986:37-38) says that a materialist culture and consciousness oriented to products and goods from all over the world was the prerequisite for the technological revolution of industrial capitalism. "A critique to Weber's theory of the ethic of capitalism, Mukherji accounts for the occidental capitalisms. She places taste, demand, and fashion at the centre of this argument and says that it is these that laid the ground for capitalisms in the east". Capitalism, took firm hold in the east due to the prior exposure of these societies to various products from

the west. The products of the west and the process of westernization are the past notions descriptive of any change in the east. Globalisation is the new form of this relation to the west.

So one can say that the exposure to different notions of taste, demand, and fashion is a part of life. Like Hajira 20, and Aliya 22, two sisters who work as teachers, not yet married, live with their family of brothers, uncles and aunts and their father. Their mother works in a suburb of Hyderabad and comes home on weekends. Their level of 'taste' is already set in terms of the gadgets they own even though the house appears to be unkempt at first sight. The things for the house are bought from a lower middle class area where things are not very expensive.

For my sister's wedding, we got it from Nampally A.P. Furniture. Sometimes we also get it made. At home, we have a TV, Mixer Grinder, Cassette recorder, almirah. We want to buy an oven. God willing we will buy one. We want to buy in the exhibition. (Aliya, 2000)

The market for consumer goods was always there prior to globalization; it was at a low scale. What has changed is the scale and the quantities of each of these things. Capitalism thrives not just through mere accumulation, but also in the cultural realm via the imaginary, the signified, and the desirous. Capitalism needs culture to penetrate and lay its foundations. According to Goux (1996:200-202), the production is always complemented by another kind of production which is the production of desire. So economic value lies in the intensity of desiring and not in the production of needs. The key word then is the "intensity of desiring" which is created by the media blitz and the various avenues of consumption. If the phase before globalization had the economic production as its focus, now the focus has shifted to consumption where capital finds its accumulating capacity.

Sheela, 40, is a homemaker since a few years having worked for a good 15 years. Her husband Roshan, 45, works in a software company and they have two daughters. The moment one steps into one of these upper middle class households, one can feel the 'ambience' that was deliberately created for a particular effect. There is a definite 'structure' and 'idea' behind the interiors. They are well thought over and designed, sometimes by a professional, with the ideas of cleanliness, comfort, formality, modern looking interiors in mind.

We had an interior designer. We know what we wanted and we told him that. We had plans to put a stained glass partition. We wanted to enjoy every bit of setting up the house. It is once in a lifetime thing. One always believed that give the job to the person who does it best we are not experts in every aspect of life. It is easy to put a fabricated kitchen today we could have done that. Gautier is a good one Wood Wagon, My Home Furniture, Sauder, Gurjari, and Dream Décor. In Shoppers Stop, you pay for the quality. You can make out which is Badi Chowdi, which is Shoppers Stop. Badi Chowdi is typical middle class stuff, no exclusiveness. It is run of the mill. Shoppers Stop, is not very exclusive but it has its own style. When we thought of designing the house, we looked at the comfort level. We wanted it to be cozy. We wanted open space for the children. So they can study, move, and dance. (Sheela, 40, Interview 2000)

It is the case with Deepika,34, who has a collection of the best things a global market could offer. She is trained to be an Interior Designing, is a French teacher, and loves to read. One understands the importance of the signifiers in her life world. Deepika is a single woman and since the last interview has moved to Mumbai for better job prospects there.

The crystal has been with us since a long time. It is my mother's collection; I collect an assortment of things, not particularly crystals. I am a designer myself. But I like reading magazines like Inside Outside, Ikea, etc., some of the ideas are good. Gautier is good, Lexus is also good. But I prefer to get things made with my designs if there is ever a need (Deepika, 34, Interview 2000).

Moreover, so do Devan, 41, and Kranti, 35, who believe in the expression of the self and one's ideas through one's house. Devan is an architect and Kranti is a

teacher in an upper class school. Both live in a small but beautiful house and are always working on the home interiors.

I have seen them and I do not believe in buying it off the shelf. When I can do it myself, why buy it. If it is off the shelf, you do not have to put in too much of effort. You do not spend too much of time. Lexus -the quality would be better than a local carpenter. You have to be a little choosy about it. It is your decision ultimately. Many ranges, Lexus is economic, Gautier is higher side. Pelican is much more. (Kranti, 35, Interview 2000)

Compared to the above upper middle class respondents, is the middle middle class notion of house and interiors. According to Bourdieu (1984:247-8) the “aesthetic properties (studied, imaginative, harmonious)” of commodities “grows as one moves up the social hierarchy, whereas the proportion of ‘functionalist’ (clean, practical, easy to maintain)” commodities declines. Shobha, 55, has functional yet a well decorated house. It is not deliberately set out to give an appearance but the ‘things’ which accumulate in a house because of travel, calendars, gifts are on display and have to be out there for others to see. However, the first expense to be made was for her the purchase of the house and after that comes everything else inside it.

In the beginning I wanted to construct our own house. We were in a rented house I would not make any furniture and all. We used to adjust with chairs . After we constructed our own house we purchased them. If I go to anybody’s house or if I see something if it is convenient we will follow that and I do the changes. By visiting others houses we get some ideas and we will do that. (Shobha, 55, Interview 2000)

According to Woodward, (2003:10-13) “(F)or middle class women aesthetic expertise and coordination are valued most highly, while in working class homes order,

cleanliness and family happiness are most valued". In addition, so is the case with Nalini 45, who wants her children to settle down and then wants to buy a house.

And if you talk about this house, then whatever you do to these quarters it is a waste. It is easy for the children; it is centrally located for both of us. First, I want the children settled and then I will buy the new house. For the house, if I have some of these sofa covers, if I find something nice I buy it because I keep changing it. I have four sets of covers. If I go to the exhibition, I buy. We do not look at people's house and want to do the same. Another thing is, if I find some item in 4-5 people's house I would not buy that. You should be unique, and you should be creative and not follow others. (Nalini, 45, Interview 1999)

Some of the homes I have looked at have a particular structure. There is a huge 'hall' that has cupboards, a mirror and a sink, a couple of chairs, a doree for people to sit on and a bed or a divan. This is typical of a lower middle class household with small variations. The lower middle class household would have an all-in-one 'hall' or a 'TV room', which serves as a dining room, family room, living room, and sometimes a bedroom too. The lower middle class households were typically made up of 2-3 rooms constituting the whole house. The second room contains the cooking stove, some utensils, and kitchen items, a cupboard and sometimes a bed.

Deepthi, 34, is single, and lives with her parents and is a teacher. Their house is made up of small rooms opening into one another. One room has three doors. It has shelves with all kinds of papers and calendars and right down to a mirror, a hand painted wicker painting sold in melas is kept in the shelves. The items in the shelf reflect that the rational, space saving 'to-each-it is-own-place' kind of arrangement of house, is not there. Modern kind of segregation of living, sleeping, entertaining, cooking, spaces is not there in the houses.

Another such household has a single room, which is the whole house. Ansuya, 36, and Ramesh, 45, live in a two room flat. Ansuya is a homemaker and Ramesh works two shifts, is a clerk with an automobile company in Moulali- a suburb of Hyderabad, the other is part time- as a salesperson in a cloth store. The front room has a TV, a table- higher than a coffee table and holds the newspaper, and a chair and a duree on the floor. The room inside has an almirah (cupboard), a shelf in the wall with a mirror, the kitchen table that holds the single kerosene stove and a bed. The bathroom is a common one that is shared between more than three families.

The interiors are devoid of any kind of practical or comfortable segregation of the house. There were plans to buy an apartment- four years back- that would have a bedroom, hall, kitchen, and possibly two bedrooms. This would have been a lifetime investment, made after saving the whole amount rather than taking a loan and repaying it monthly, that now has become a common feature. I could not meet this family again since all the past residents had moved out and there was a new set of renters in the building. Talking about any kind of consumption, whether it was shopping, or interiors in the house were difficult with this family.

We have a TV, Radio, Fridge, and Almirah. We will buy just the flat first. We do not have the space for it. Most part of my salary is spent on rent, food, and expenses. (Ramesh, 43, Interview 2000)

Another kind of household would be with a dining table, a television, and chairs. There also is a division between the living quarters and the rest of the house. Not more than three rooms comprise the house apart from the kitchen and bathroom. There is a family room, which has a TV, a dining table. Sometimes the dining area is separate. There is more than one bedroom. The family is conscious of the appearance of the drawing room where most of the guests come and sit. The awareness of the appearance

is a kind of beginning of the awareness of the public 'eye'. This consciousness is what provokes all attempts to make things look nice.

Money is spent on such things as curtains, furniture, TV stand, table covers, cushion cover 'sets' which are draped over upholstered areas to protect from dust and for longevity. This is a common feature in almost all households. In the dining room, it is about the table, hotplates, extra sets of serving bowls and dishes. In the bedroom, it is about extra sets of bedcovers bought in the government showrooms or the art and craft bazaars and fairs. For all the families the house is the most important investment that has already been made. The house is a piece of property that is already there. It has been bought, built, or rented out. The middle class families are in possession of such a property in some form or the other.

And it's not that everyone feels the need to show off with a good appearance of the house. For some the house is a functional entity that by itself fulfills the need of property. For Ashok Raj it is about getting the right cupboard for the son who is going to 'work' is what is important. The utility value for the 'son' becomes the symbolic capital in order to get the right kind of alliance in marriage.

We saw the cupboards with neighbors. We got their design and changed it slightly. It was required for the children's clothes and my son's computer. (Ashok Raj, 47, Interview 2000)

For Ghousia, 37, and Kaleemuddin, 45, the gadgets represent the desires of the consuming class in general. The different range of 'things' or gadgets, that are available for each of the classes within the middle class makes it possible for inclusion of more and more into the consumer markets.

From Nampally. We went to the shop and asked for these. First we went to Kachiguda. That was very expensive, and then we came here. We liked the color and the price was of our budget, so we brought it. We have a color TV, Tape Recorder, Gas, Mixer Grinder. We recently brought the Color TV. We don't have

any plans to spend any money, but if it works out we want to look at buying a fridge. (Ghousia, 37, Interview 2000)

Therefore, it is the signs and labels which are consumed and not just the objects. According to Sheela who goes for the branded clothes shopping is all about desiring and flaunting the names. For Simmel (1978:63), "An object does not gain a new quality if I call it valuable; it is valuable because of the qualities it has....value is not a quality of the objects, but a judgment upon them which remains inherent in the subject...this subjectivity is only provisional and not essential". In desiring what we do not yet own or enjoy, we place the content of our desire outside ourselves. We desire objects only if they are not immediately given to us for our use and enjoyment; i.e. to the extent that they resist our desire. So, for Roshan and Sheela the ultimate purchase would be crystals for the house. It is the only thing, which seems to be beyond reach. Roshan who works for a software firm has since moved to Bangalore for a better paying job and a better lifestyle.

I would like to buy a lot of crystal ware for my house. I want to have one corner of the house only with crystal. That is immediate. It is on the cards. One fine day I will do that. I love crystal. I would like to shop for crystals maximum when I go to the US. Two things- silver becomes dull over time, crystal does not. You give it a brushing it looks good. It is delicate; it gives you a feeling of niceness to specific area. Delicateness to one corners of your house. Sophisticated look. It does not look gaudy. Silver and brass look gaudy. Crystal has to be in a very sophisticated corner of the house. I want to create that. (Sheela, 40, Interview 2000)

For Shalini 27, and Vipul, 31, who are both working and have no children yet, the income goes into 'spending' for themselves and the house.

We got the dining table made specially ordered by a designer. I had liked something in the book called Ikea so I got that done. I prefer this to the readymade furniture that is available in Lexus, Gautier etc. They have some good stuff but highly expensive. I look at magazines and try to manipulate the structures at

home. I like doing that. It gives a novelty to the house. You feel that when you wake up everyday to something different it feels good. The stores in Nampally are all substandard designs. I would not want those in my house. One, they are run of the mill, same things turned out by carpenter who get their ideas from their Masters (boss) who just bother about monetary costs and nothing else. So you might find a sofa set that's carved, and upholstered in brocade type material and it doesn't deserve even an eyeful. Gautier is good, polished refined furniture. So much effort has gone into it in terms of artistry, detail, design there is nothing like that in those stores. (Vipul, 31, Interview 2000)

As Immanuel Kant (Simmel, 1978:63) has said about objects and experiencing through the senses, "the possibility of experience is the possibility of the objects of experience"- because to have experiences means that our consciousness creates objects from sense impressions. Simmel (1978:67), in the same vein says, "Objects are not difficult to acquire because they are valuable but we call those objects valuable which resist our desire to possess them. Since the desire encounters resistance and frustration, the objects gain significance that would never have been attributed to them by an unchecked will".

The upper middle class in general is the biggest draw for the market when it comes to the interiors of the house or when it comes to buying things for the house. They believe in spending 'consistently' on the material-symbolic aspect of a house. The most easily available items in the market have the least value. Those with unique qualities or the label of novelty attached to them, like the crystals for a respondent, has more value. Shopping, and interiors of a house are the external attributes in a household, which are visible to the eye. The modern ways of living in and around the house, the influence of the media, the availability of professional help albeit for a grand price, all make for the superficial, the ephemeral in the everyday lives of people. These new ways of living transport one's imagination to different milieus and ambiances. The aesthetic of the house is structured to be sold in the market and the disposable incomes make for

the dépense. Capital creates profits in order to keep the work going. The extra money is never saved up in order to retire early. It is used up and a lack or a lacuna (empty shell) is left to be filled up with more work.

## 5. Leisure, Media, and the Middle Class Self

Work is a rational activity, which is goal-oriented and directed toward a certain purpose whereas, leisure is about spontaneity, lowering of defenses and living in the moment. For Simmel (Frisby and Featherstone 1997:225) work is an organic relation to the world and leisure or in his words, adventure is a non-organic relation. The former is natural and the latter is a refined, partial or a temporary relation to the real world. In that sense, one is practical about work and for leisure purposes; one tends to be irrational and emotional.

Relaxing, vacation, holiday, free time, spare time, retreat, escape, and break: these are synonyms to leisure and seem to apply to all activity apart from work that the middle class is involved in. This chapter deals with the escape from work. It deals with the activity of leisure.

Free time usually means no work and this has changed to where one is made to work in order to enjoy oneself. One could begin this section on leisure with Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* published in 1899, the first major contribution to the literature on consumption. For Veblen, the two major ways in which one's wealth can be demonstrated for all to see and admire is through conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption. An obvious show of wealth is the fundamental phenomenon, which can take different forms under different circumstances or social systems. In the period before industrialization, conspicuous leisure was the most efficient way of showing off one's wealth. Decorum required an "abstention from labor"; the qualifier to wealth was not just the money in the treasury but the badge of "leisure". Having to work in order to make a living is dishonorable and hence 'indecent' and undignified.

Veblen's leisure class would avoid anything to do with productive labor, and so be occupied with things that did not produce anything intrinsically useful. This class existed around industrialization and with new industries came new jobs and a new class of people who had more money to spend. Feudal society with its rigid class segregation gave way to bourgeois society.

The middle class in Hyderabad throws light on the idea of excess in terms of both conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption. The ways of relaxing, unwinding at the end of a hard day's work is a mix of both.

For Veblen, leisure works as a way of attaining honor in small societies where everyone knows everyone. In large societies instanced by anonymity, it is conspicuous consumption, which is a definitive way of showing one's financial influence. The basic premise to wealth was 'display' and making a statement through what one consumed.

In present day postcolonial society like India, which is witness to global capital for almost a decade now, consumption seems to be a combination of both conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption. The basic premise here is, how much you know and live the experience. How much you have traveled and lived the experience as compared to a second hand knowledge gotten from the media or friends. In Veblen's terms, one would be ashamed to talk about the things, which are not trendy, or in style. Leisure is in that sense a form of power as against the idea that it is only freedom to do what one pleases (Rojek, 1985:152).

For this couple, the 'conspicuous' is synonymous with being information savvy. One would avoid talk if it is about the shopping that you have done in a wholesale market instead of an upscale super market.

For Roshan 45, and Sheela 40, leisure is about traveling outside India. With the expansion of the aviation industry and emergence of private airlines offering discount

fairs and package deals, international travel has gone beyond being merely a vicarious experience through Bollywood. Ram works for a software firm and both live to shop, travel, and eat out- all the qualities of a typical consumer. They used to live in an upscale location in Hyderabad and have recently moved to Bangalore. The place of interest –here the US is recalled with much enthusiasm and detail as if one who has already been there. Traveling is exciting where the whole world is one village.

Last was Singapore in 1999. I would love to go to a place like Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Mauritius, U.S, Kerala. I like to go to any beaches. US is in 2003. Just to see what it is in that land that attracts so many people. Is it only the money factor or is there any thing else there. Go to Niagara Falls, Disney land. We definitely have to go to Las Vegas and see the casinos that are talked about so much and go to the Shopping Malls. New York, Washington DC, Florida, see the White House, Sans Francisco. From there we will go to Antigua and West Indies Island. I love the seashore and then may be the Bahamas (Sheela, 40, Interview 2000).

Adventure, according to Simmel (TCS, 1991:224), has the following characteristics: “it transcends the narrow rationality of life; it connects with the character and identity of the person; it is a specific organization of some significant meaning with a beginning and an end”. Leisure in today’s life replicates the same aspects of an adventure, which Simmel described a century ago.

According to Mohanty (2003: x), it is the “ceaseless human urge for exploration” that describes the constant drive for cultural travel throughout the world. If travel is about exploring, then the middle class desire to constantly explore India through the LTC marks it as an agenda by the government to keep the nation as the limit of exploration. It was one of the means to let the people enjoy leisure-time specified by the rules and regulations of the government. Travel was time taken out from work, but it had the nation as its boundaries. This was set for the middle class. As compared to travel now, where the middle class indulges in the affluence created by the global capital and there are no boundaries of the nation or the state.

For Gayatri, 73, who has retired from a private job of thirty years, there are no boundaries as far as traveling for leisure goes. She worked as a personal assistant to the CEO in a private firm and has accumulated her share of retirement savings. Her old house has been given for 'development' as one would call it, i.e. construction of a multi-level apartment complex that will be rented out. These new developments in and around Hyderabad are one of the many avenues to capital. This will provide her with a much better disposable income than five years back.

I will take a trip to Europe. I do not want gold or a diamond necklace. I will go to Australia. Whatever we wanted to do, we have done. Now only thing we want to do is travel. We have 20 years more to live. Why should I travel at that age when I can travel now? When you are strong, you must go. Now when I grow old I will not enjoy the same things. The roller coaster, I enjoyed when I was young but now I cannot. (Gayatri, 73, Interview 2000)

For Deepika, 34, and her family, it is the same. Deepika's father had worked in the foreign services and is retired for almost a decade now. The family travels regularly, their recent trip was to Sri Lanka, and another one is already planned to Australia. Leela, 70, Deepika's mother loves to extol the different places that she has visited.

We go out for vacations. We visit family and friends. We went to Poona, Bangalore, and Delhi. We have relatives and friends in Switzerland. My sister lives there. We travel a lot with my friends. We have done both train and air travel and we drove around a lot. Especially when we went to south India. It was nice in the car. We have a driver. He came with us. (Leela, 70, Interview 1999)

For the above set of upper middle class respondents, leisure is about globe trotting, eating out, and relaxing. For the middle middle class, leisure is to do with capital but at a smaller level. The new avenues of entertainment are a big hit with the middle middle class. This is true of most of the respondents for whom at least one visit has been a possibility. The theme parks, the water parks are a hit. The places like Elles World, Ocean Park are some of them. A new entry into this 'novelty parade' is the Snow World

that is a major attraction for the people who have never seen the snow. The rates for such a spectacle are high but it does not seem to deter people from visiting it.

For somebody like Muneera, 70, leisure is an activity of the mind. She likes to read and prefers it to going out. Muneera is a principal and founder of a school in Malakpet and runs it like a family business. Her daughters Dilshad, 39, and Kareema, 33; and daughter-in-law Qurram 37, are teachers in the school and there is a vast difference in the attitude of the two generations. Muneera likes to stay at home while the children like to shop and eat out. Her daughter Dilshad, who is a homemaker spends time at home with the children helping them prepare for their exams. She has lived abroad for a few years before returning to India and has the comfort of the money earned in dollars. This daughter has no requirement to work and spends time at home. She does not mind sending her children to the theme parks. The working members in the family (the other daughter- Kareema and the daughter-in-law- Qurram) do not like to send their children to the theme parks because of affordability.

We went to parks like Lumbini Park, Ocean Park; it is a change for them. Travel out of Hyderabad is not possible. The children would like to go but then every two years I had a kid. They have all the modern beginnings but the change to traveling has not come in them. For holidays, they do not think of traveling. While abroad, we went to Singapore that is all. Then I had two kids only. (Dilshad, 39, Interview 2000)

The commodification of leisure, the redefinition of consumption, inclusive of leisure, is according to Slater (1997:29), a crucial element of sustaining capitalist growth. The most common form of leisure in the pre-globalization phase in India and now with the middle middle class has been traveling by availing the LTC (Leave Travel Concession) which enabled a lot of intra-country travel for the government employees. One can say that it was the 'entertainment industry' set up by the makers of the rules and regulations

in the nation-building plan. The 'citizen' was supposed to avail the opportunity to visit and be informed about the rest of the country. The respondents in the government sector have all availed of this opportunity more than a few times.

For the middle middle class, the most common form of travel has been through LTC. It is the compensation received from the government before or after traveling. This has however enabled a lot of travel within the country enhancing one's knowledge base of other regions.

Venkat Rao, 71, and Vaidehi, 59, is a retired couple who have lived most of their lives in Kharagpur, which is home to the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT). Rao was a Professor of Physics and Vaidehi, his wife a homemaker. They have come back to their native state, Andhra Pradesh to settle down and now Rao works for an institute, which trains students for entrance exams to the IITs. Here Vaidehi recounts their experience of the travels made possible due to the allowance (LTC). Therefore, leisure is already a possibility- a commodity that, if not 'availed' of or used up at the right time means money lost.

Every two years we took LTC. We went to Aurangabad, Ajanta Ellora, Mahabalipuram, Bangalore, and Mysore, then to Kanyakumari, Rameshwaram, Madhurai, and Madras. We went to Bombay and Shirdi soon after marriage. It is expensive now. But it depends on the budget. We chose comfortable places; we planned. In some places we had close friends or relatives so we stayed there. Then in Aurangabad, I had a friend. She gave her car to us. (Vaidehi, 59, Interview 1999)

And so does Nalini, 45, who works for the state secretariat. Her husband Maheshwar, 53 is with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). Maheshwar wanted to become an actor, had tried hard to get into movies, and gave it up due to marriage and the responsibilities, which come with it. They have all their three children well settled

into jobs and marriages. Nalini is now an accounts officer in the state government. For her, leisure is about LTC:

We went to Bombay (Mumbai), with LTC. Almost the whole India we saw. All major cities except Calcutta. I would go and the children would be with him or vice versa. We went to Tirupati every two years. And our family is mostly in three places – Vijaywada, Guntur, and Hyderabad. During summer we do not go to any places but these three; we have a lot of family get togethers. (Nalini, 45, Interview 2000)

In addition, Shobha, 55, who is another accounts officer in the secretariat. Her husband Kumar, 65 has retired from the private multi national company. For them too the standard was to avail the LTC. Shobha and her husband live in their own house for the last 20 years and have a comfortable life. For them a lot of their free time goes into helping their relatives, who need jobs, come to the city to write exams and require financial help. Both her children are professionals- Shilpa, 26, is a software engineer and has recently married and moved to the US and the older daughter, Sridevi, 28, is also in the US and she is married to a doctor. Traveling with an LTC requires planning and if that is done, the possibilities seem to be endless.

We go to even remote places every summer, we avail the LTC. We go to new places. We have gone south up to Kanyakumari. Once we went to 32 places once to 20 places-entire month we traveled. Then we went to Kashmir, Prayaga, Allahabad, and Bombay, all of them. Except Delhi but this year maybe we will go. Shobha, 55, Interview 1999)

For the government employees after the benefit of the pension, the planned vacation is the big bonus. For the ones who have the capabilities with global capital, travel knows no bounds and vacation outside India becomes a badge of honor.

With capitalism and new forms of leisure, the same persons imagine other worlds and travel is about not just within India but also outside India. Shobha has recently traveled to the US to visit her daughter. The places of entertainment for the upper and middle middle class are the ultimate avenues for enjoyment and are still out of reach for the lower middle class. Some of them do not venture out to these places and know nothing about them. It is the home and the extended family, which is the traditional form of leisure. They prefer to meet relatives- brothers and sisters, and such significant others. It is the larger community that is a place and space of leisure. The traditional forms of leisure in terms of 'socializing' and social functions are the main focal point of change for the lower middle class. This is in sharp contrast to the upper middle class for whom capitalist forms of entertainment are the 'in thing'.

According to Urry (Corrigan 1997:142) it is the difference between one's normal place of work, the routine, and the object or place of the leisure, which is important to understand leisure itself. This could be travel, shopping or just plain watching TV. The crucial element in traveling is the movement away from the routine of the house and work, which serves as the most attractive thing. It is the transformation of the sensory experience from the routine that is the big USP (Unique Selling Point) of the travel industry. For the lower middle class, however, the choices are hard to make between a meal and the ticket money for the bus ride. And sometimes it is not even that for Lalita and her husband who barely are able to make ends meet. Lalita, 35, works as a teacher in a slum school and her husband Ganesh 39, is a salesperson in an auto dealership. Both of them work and their only daughter lives with Lalita's sister in Siddipet (a suburban town) because they cannot afford to keep her at home while they both go to work.

We work till 7.00 and in the morning start at 9.00 so it's like machine-like life. Only Sunday is a holiday. Only the two of us are home. We finish our cooking and tiffin by 10 am or 11 am. Then we are free, we watch TV sit and talk. We do not go out on Sundays. We are out the whole week so we like being home on Sundays. We do not go for movies or anything. We go for movies maybe once a month or once in 2 months. But we don't go out a lot. We have everything at home, we cook and eat. If we go out on Sunday, also it looks like it was a working day that day also. Both of us go at the same time. We have our tiffin, carry our boxes and go. Then I return at 4.30 then I cook and clean up and its 7.00 by then and he comes at 7.30 by 8.30 we have dinner, watch TV and sleep that's it. (Lalita, 35, Interview 1999)

As a part of relaxing is the process of eating out which has become a common form of leisure. It is mostly the upper middle class, the middle middle class who can afford to eat out, and for the lower middle class it means a big dent in the daily expenses like the bus fare or the auto fare. Eating out for some is because of an emergency-sickness- but never out of relaxing. For Lalita, they eat out only if she is very sick to cook and has no choice but to buy food.

It is very rare that we eat out. When I am not well or something like that. Then I have to spend so much to buy idly or something. Sometimes if I did not wake up in time to cook we are forced to eat outside. (Lalita, 35, Interview 2000)

Food is something that is absolutely and solely confined to the individual. In that sense a meal is a very personal thing and at the same time, it is a primitive and universal habit, which can bring together persons who don't share anything in common. The significance of the meal according to Simmel (Frisby and Featherstone 1997:130-1) is about its regularity, its form, and the socializing power. For Divakar, 47, eating is a social thing. Divakar is a software professional, and for him eating a dosa or a pizza is the same thing. It is the eating or the social aspect of taking somebody out for a meal is of significance. Spending a few hundred rupees is small change. Divakar lives in Poona

now and works for multinational Bank. He has lived in the US and the gulf countries for quite a few years. Leisure sometimes translates into a good meal.

As far as its a few hundred rupees, it is okay. Like today, we did not plan to go out or treat to my sister but they said we want to go so we said okay we will foot the bill. She has been asking for a long time and I wanted to give her a treat. It will be Rs.500-600. They wanted to go to pizza corner or somewhere. The place is not overcrowded. It is like a bakery shop with the ice creams and masala dosas also. I think it serves mostly cakes, pastries, pizzas. (Divakar, 47, Interview 2000)

Roshan, 45, for whom eating out is like the best thing in life. Leisure is about shopping, eating out, and spending time with the family.

I love food. I just experiment and I have tasted varieties of food. Only thing we have not eaten is a lizard and a frog. Good food is a weakness. I love seafood, crabs, prawns, and fish. The way she enjoys shopping, I enjoy food. You only live once. That is my philosophy for eating. You have a time bar for eating, you cannot eat after 40. You start thinking about how to reduce. So I'm nearing that. Good food. That is it. It does not make a difference whether I am eating in a dhaba or a five star hotel. (Roshan, 45, Interview 2000)

Aliya, 22, and Hajira 20, two sisters had to be interviewed in the front room of the house under close surveillance. A conservative Muslim family, with many men (brothers, cousins) hanging around outside created a tense atmosphere and the answers to the questions became limited.

We go to Bahar or Niagara. We go just like that when we get into the mood. My father tells us and we make plans after that. (Hajira, 22, Interview 2000)

For Deepti 34, who is still single, eating out is linked to dates with old school friends. Deepti lives with her parents and her brother. Relaxing for her is a change of activity from the routine of the workday.

So monthly once we make it a point to meet, for lunch, movies then we go to Tank-bund. From there to any ice cream, parlor and we come home by 8.00. We go according to the budget. Suppose we want to go to Chinese we go to Nanking, if it is vegetarian, we go to Gayatri Bhavan it depends on the theater too. Like last time when we went for a movie in Sangeet, we went to this hotel in Secunderabad. My daddy he does not like eating out. He feels it is a waste of money. My brother eats with his friends and I go with mine. My mother she will worry about the bill and say 1300, for eight members, and we feel it is cheap. (Deepti, 34, Interview 2000)

For Vaidehi, eating out is about 'change' from the routine when one does not feel like preparing food. For Vaidehi, 59, and Venkat Rao, 71, eating out is a routine, which is an established norm since long time back.

Gayatri Bhavan, Minerva once in a week. This girl will say after father comes I will ask him. Now a days we are not going because of his (son's) studies. So only the three of us go and I get it packed for him (son). And my children like north Indian food and I like masala dosa. (Vaidehi, 59, Interview 2000)

For all the respondents the idea of leisure is linked to family time. Whether it is the upper middle class or the lower middle class, the family is the centre of all leisure activity. Some of the activities for leisure which are less linked to the capital intensive processes of entertainment and modernity are activities which move away from the typical cultural interventions of capitalism and appear to be the 'quality time' or 'works of leisure'. A notion developed in the sociology of leisure, quality time is about spending 'one-on-one' time with the family where what matters is not the number of

one spends but what one does while being present with the family. Listening, communicating, interacting are all new names for this process of 'being in the moment.' Each of the respondents had many interesting things to say about this.

For Nalini, 45, her favorite way to relax was to have a conversation with her handicapped child who is deaf and dumb and needs her special care. She is an accounts officer in the government sector and lives with her son and husband. Both her daughters are married and well settled. Talking to her daughter about her day at school, and her other children about the 'fun' they have; talking to them like a friend is and has been her most important contribution as a mother. Her daughter has a hearing aid on which Nalini has spent a small fortune (Rs.35, 000). The daughter is married and had her first baby this year.

I spend some half hour with my younger daughter. She likes that, she has a hearing problem. My children come and talk to me about what they did in school/college. Even the ones where the girls are teased by a group of boys and how they reacted. That happens in the morning. And my daughter, she likes to talk to me and she feels bad when I am too busy or when I watch TV. So with her I have these regular habits. After that, I go to office. Generally I used to watch news more, Star TV BBC news, DDI. My point is, instead of going out for a change, why don't we change the people we know. (Nalini, 45, Interview 2000)

With the differentiation in classes, came a differentiation of leisure pursuits. According to Veblen, one could spend time and money on a sport but conversely, the working class may be able to play soccer, but polo was financially unviable for them. So the kind of sport one indulges in relates to the distinction attached to it. In societies of late capitalism or complex industrial societies, consumption becomes more important than leisure alone. In that sense, one might be interested in reading as a solitary pursuit of leisure, but one might think it to be too 'indecent' according to Veblen to open a

library. The two respondents below- Deepika and Pramila, serve to illustrate this idea enunciated by Veblen, in a sharp way. Deepika,34, is a French teacher and has since moved to Mumbai to teach. She is single and likes to spend time reading, watching movies and going to art shows in Mumbai. Pramila, 48 is a teacher in a school in a poorer neighborhood and garners respect for being an authoritarian person in school.

For Deepika, reading is about keeping away from the ‘gossiping’ serials on TV and for Pramila, reading and opening a library is about doing a social good.

I read a lot of fiction, romance, and historical, non-fiction, anything that interests me. I watch very little TV and that too if there is something on while we are having dinner I watch it otherwise I do not like TV. It eats up your time. But I watch it sometimes. The late night movies. (Deepika, 34, Interview 1999)

I also want to open a library. After I cross 55 years. I used to maintain a library before and lend books before my daughter was born I have the cuttings of serials (like cartoon strips in newspapers) and I have then bound into a book. I have about 100 novels. Fifty magazines like Chandamama, Balamitra. I can invest Rs.500 and buy more books to start a library. (Pramila, 48, Interview 1999)

Pramila and her husband Surender, 51 lived in a two-room house but now have moved to a new flat of their own. Both are well educated and share the love of books. Their only daughter Shanti has a spinal growth problem because of which her height is stunted and for all her 12 years, she looks like a 7 year old. Pramila’s husband has retired as a peon and she herself works in a school as a Hindi teacher. According to Pramila both of them love books:

I sing songs, read Bhagwat Gita. He likes spiritual things. He does not like movies, shopping etc. He can discuss well about Puranas and Vedas. My schoolwork and housework is enough for me. If there is time I sit and write.

Anything small in Telugu. I have interest in that. I write whatever comes to my mind. My thoughts. Like there was this heavy rains in Hyderabad. So I wrote about how it felt being in Himayatnagar (a local area). I would like to spend time with small children. I do not have any extended family living with me. If we go somewhere we think of temples and god. We have been to Shiridi with my brother and his family. We have gone to Srisailam, Tirupathi. From the school I have gone with children and other teachers. To Srisailam, Basar, and in Krishna District we have been to the shipyard and radar center. (Pramila, 48, Interview 1999)

One has come across a sharp divide in means of leisure within the middle class. The divide is between those who have the disposable income and those who do not. For many, leisure time has been taken over by the “entertainment industry”. It seems that it is the social visibility of these practices of leisure, which have become paramount. For others the presence of this ‘industry’ is of little consequence. Their leisure is governed by the standards they set for themselves. This notion is in the less well off and those families without the global capital attached to their incomes. The characteristics of the concept of leisure as promoted by the economy for the development of capitalism is its social visibility. It is capital intensive and status oriented for the upper middle class and for the lower middle class, it is neither of these. Leisure then is what people want to make of their lives. For Ghousia, 37, a school teacher, leisure is about eating out and reading the Reader’s Digest.

We have work in the house. Some cleaning or special cooking. Sometimes movies, sometimes Lumbini Park or to dinner but not very much. Once in 2 months or 3 months or after exams. We went to Niagara Hotel and it was very expensive so we did not go again. It’s a change. That day we planned to cook one less meal and eat in the hotel. I used to read Reader’s Digest from my uncle’s house. He had a collection but now I stopped. I like reading Urdu novels also. You can learn a lot from reading only the Digest. (Ghousia, 37, Interview 2000)

## Media Consumption

It is the media, which have become the all-pervasive agents of any kind of change. The ideology of consumption, instanced through television caters to the middle class, which in turn buys into it and buys the goods sold through advertising. Production of value is through production of desire and not through mere 'satisfaction of needs' (Goux 1999: 198-202). It is the symbolic nature of advertising, which creates value-advertising as a genre makes the closest connection between economy and culture and the new visual regime instanced in television (Rajagopal 2002:67); it is the regime of television which creates value through advertisements. It is the media, which makes social visibility of all aspects of life a reality. So, one comes across shopping areas, new designer wear, new schools, new toys, personal lives of celebrities, the washing soaps, the movies and many such examples. There is a history to all this in India, where the late 1980s saw the development of electronic media. One could foresee the coming of the electronic media in the installation of television centers across India when Mrs.Indira Gandhi was the prime minister. This development in the late 1980 and early 1990 also brought with it the shift in focus of the economy from 'production' to 'consumption'. This was also a part of the development of late capitalism, which saw capital moving from its avenues of production to cultural ones. The process of economic development in very broad terms saw the making of the new consumer. The focus of development was also 'production' and the focus of electronic media in all its forms – TV, internet, video conferencing is consumption. It is consumption, which enables the formation of "communities of sentiment" (Appadurai 1996:8) which are the movers of the economy. A community of sentiment is a "group that begins to imagine and feel

things together". The mass media, because of the conditions of collective reading, criticism, and pleasure creates communities that share similar ideas on a broad level.

For Shobha and Pramila, the popularity of Telugu television serials like "Antarangaalu", "Kalisundam Ra", "Pavitrabandham" across the middle middle class and the lower middle class makes for the formation of the 'communities' that Appadurai is talking about. As Pramila, a schoolteacher who loves to open a library once she retires has this to say.

I do not like serials because they do not solve the problems in them. Till now all these (Kalisundam Ra, Pavitrabandham) programmers have problem solving ideas in them. (Pramila, 48, Interview 1999)

And Shobha for whom the social reform element in television serials is what appeals to her. Shobha is an officer in the state government office and has both her children married. Her husband Kumar, is also retired and Shobha has already visited her daughter in the US. Recently her other daughter was married and moved to the US too.

I like to watch goods speeches, rituals, religious discourses but I am not a blind follower. I do not believe in Swamijis. I will appreciate the social service – Now there is Satya Sai Baba, he is providing water to villages, building education institutions, I appreciate that and I want to participate in social services, but I do not believe blindly in miracles. Swamijis are the ambassadors of creating faith in god. (Shobha, 55, Interview 1999)

At the level of individual experiences, the interaction with the various media is a given. Apart from the books and magazines, TV, internet, video, radio, the cassette recorder are the forces of the media, which bring a different dimensionality to the

process of consumption by investing value to products and commodities. Another such community of sentiment is the one that is based on religious serials and discourses. The special channels devoted to leaders from all religions are a new development that attracts its own viewers. For Shobha, Vaidehi, and Satyavati these are popular and the day sometimes begins with them.

Shobha -Early in the morning, the religious discourses will control the whole day. It will control our mind.

Vaidehi - On Gemini I watch Shiridi Sai , Bhakthi Sai.

Satyavati - After I finish my work I watch TV. I study religious books. I do Sai baba puja. Then the children come for tuition.

The aspect of reading is another common element in understanding the reach and popularity of various media. Reading creates the private space away from the activities of the household and that of work. It is a favorite pastime for many and some of the popular magazines and books were, Telugu magazines like Swati, Bhoomika; the English ones like Readers Digest, Femina, Women's Era, Pakeezah Aanchal (Urdu) and the Hindi ones like Sarita, Shobha.

Advertisements on the various media take on the function of messengers of desire. These are the strongest vehicles or carriers of messages taking desire to its height.

According to Haug (1986:16), the purpose of commodity production is not creation of just use-value but manufacture for sale. Once the sale is done the exchange value is realized. For such a purpose, the advertisements come into the picture and maneuver the changes in the "commodity-body" or the "use-form" of the commodity. According to Haug, "a double reality is produced; first the use-value; second the

appearance of use-value". This is the aesthetic (the artistic quality, the visual appearance) of the commodity that creates the 'second skin' and widest meaning is given to the commodity, also detaching the conception of 'use-value' from the object itself. "... the sale is only the start to the buyer's realization of purpose in the use and enjoyment of the purchase. Appearance becomes just as important as the commodity's ... Something that is simply useful but does not appear to be so, will not sell, while something that seems to be useful, will sell". (p15) For Pramila's daughter the advertisements are the vehicles of 'desire', encapsulating 'value' which is realized (if not every time), at least sometimes.

She immediately wants me to buy whatever she watches on TV. I shout at her. I tell her, you should buy something that you like but do not ask for whatever you see on TV. Now she wants fruitips. She will watch all these ads – for chocolates and biscuits. We do not catch them but she catches them fast. She watches movies, she likes advertisements and remembers them also. She remembers all the title songs and sings. (Pramila, 48, Interview 1999)

So the focus of commodity production in capitalist system is the appearance of the commodity and how this appearance is modified constantly and consistently to keep the buyers coming in. Aesthetic production in capitalist economies has taken on an independent function in the system of advertising and visual cultural production. This is the visual 'regime' where a regime is 'the manner of shaping of human coexistence' (Lefort 1988:15) which is brought about by the media and the other forms of visual cultures in a society. "Whoever controls the products' appearance can control the public by appealing to them sensually". The visuals, the voices, and music that is a part of the package appeals sensually to the target audience.

Simmel's analysis of an exhibition in Berlin goes as far back as 1896 and is similar to the term 'commodity aesthetics' devised by Haug (1986). In Simmel's words, the exhibition paralyzed the senses and was an absolute hypnosis. The attempts to make things attractive and worthy of buying, the attempt to endow things with this quality of beauty was probably recognized by Simmel before the Frankfurt Scholars. In his own words:

The striving to make the merely useful visually stimulating- something that was completely natural; for the struggle to render the graceless graceful for the consumers; the exhibition with its emphasis on amusement attempts a new synthesis between the principles of external stimulus and the practical functions of objects and thereby takes the aesthetic superadditum to its highest level. The banal attempt to put things in their best light, as in the cries of the street trader, is transformed in the interesting attempt to confer a new aesthetic significance from displaying objects together-something already happening in the relation between advertising and poster art. (Simmel 1896(1978))

However, how does this process of labeling of desire occur? How is a commodity attract our attention by being out there? For Haug (1986), "at the moment of exchange, the commodity is not yet a use-value to the consumer: it is still a promise of certain satisfactions yet to be experienced. It is the promise sold and this promise is established through the commodities' appearance". Haug explores the development of "commodity aesthetic"- the representation of the commodity's promise not just through advertising but also through salesmanship, brand names, design, packaging, and display. The concept of aesthetics is used in two respects; one- to 'beauty', i.e., an appearance which appeals to the senses; and second to a beauty "developed in the realization of exchange-value, whereby commodities are designed to stimulate in the onlooker the desire to purchase and the impulse to buy". This enhancement of appearance is an industry in advanced capitalism working towards manufacturing a 'second skin' independent of the actual commodity.

For Haug the project of his work is in “undermining the barrier between the ‘outside’ and the ‘inside’- between social production and human psychology-which is erected by language and the culture stemming from it (p.3). The most significant concept put forward by Haug is the critique to the idea of ‘manipulation’ by the Frankfurt School. For Haug,

manipulation can be effective only if it ‘somehow’ latched on to the objective interests of those being manipulated...while pursuing their interests. Even manipulative phenomena must speak the language of real need – they must express real needs, even in an alienated mode, if they are to inscribe themselves in the domain of ‘subjective sensuality’ where needs are experienced. (Haug, 1986:6)

Burke (1996) says of the development of capitalism in Zimbabwe, that most characterizations of “modern,” “monopoly,” or more optimistically, “late capitalism” agree that advertising and cultural hegemony have become crucial to it is functioning. The forms of knowledge, “subjectivity, identity and consciousness produced by or through the process of transformation of needs cannot be understood without a detailed map of “prior meanings”- the cultural and social raw material from which the social life of things is shaped. (Burke, 1996:3)” Commodities are meaningful not just in capitalist societies but non-capitalist as well. Clearly, goods had social meanings and social power in pre-colonial southern Africa and in other noncapitalist cultures.

In the present context of the phase of globalization in India, it is not just products which are commodities, the services, information itself, have become a product and a commodity.

Shobha watches television as a form of entertainment, but for her it is what guides her in her life. TV is the most important thing that influences thought.

Watching TV, entertainment things only because I get up early. I like poetry program that DD1 is presenting. It should be something different to keep your mind cool. It is like going to the temple. It is the same with TV or with temple. A good friend is a good controller of your behavior like that. If it is good and everybody is talking about it then we will watch it. If it is very entertaining or gives a message, then we go there. (Shobha, 55, Interview 1999)

Radha 41, and Vishnu, 45, both work for the government and their lives are structured around their children and offices. There is a constant interaction with the media on a daily basis, which is part of a routine. It is as important as eating itself.

In the morning I watch BBC, I wake up at 6: 00, and by 8: 30 I leave. And after coming back from dropping her (daughter) at school I read the paper. My husband watches action movies and I like watching Telugu movies but I do not understand the English ones so he explains a lot of things. (Radha, 41, Interview 1999)

Telugu programs are substandard. My intention is that she should learn good English and it's important for her job that she knows good English. (Vishnu, 45, Interview 1999)

Pramila a schoolteacher, mentioned above, likes to be a part of a small library and she is already in the process of setting it up. For her, the electronic media is no less interesting.

He watches old movies on TV. Old ones have a theme. I watch Harikathas and now there something called 'Padyathoran' it is about poems but in a game like anthakshri. (Pramila, 48, Interview 1999)

I do not like serials because they do not solve problems. When TV first started, they had good serials. Even though it was black and white there was Ados Pados, Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi –those were good serials. I used to watch them without fail. We like to read and we get 5-6 magazines regularly – Bhaktimala, Saptapadi, these we read. (Surender, 51, Interview 1999)

The ideology of consumption, instanced through television, caters to the middle class, which in turn buys into it and buys the goods sold through advertising.

Suresh, 33, and Rajashri, 27, is a young couple. Rajashri works for the Central Government and Suresh is a private tutor who teaches math to high school students. A slice of their day reveals the simultaneous overlap of media and consumption, the translation of images into real commodities takes place here.

We see all the products on TV and the exhibitions. We bought the water filter in exhibition. Then we bought an Iron, and then we bought Do-all and the TV. We go to meet relatives or we go to exhibitions in our free time. I used to watch a lot of TV. After marriage, I lost interest. I mean-you need continuity for watching serials. If there is a break in between, I do not like it. So I stopped watching it. Mostly, I like watching songs. In half an hour, the program should get over. The National Geographic or MTV, B4U Music. (Rajashri, 27, Interview 1999)

Advertising and media converge on the platform of commodity culture. It is the exchangeable commodity form, on top of which the whole process of accumulation rests. According to Weber capitalism has to overcome traditional attitudes to work and accumulation in order to make any headway. Alternatively, capital needs new avenues to reproduce itself. Capital has moved from the stream of production and has incorporated consumption in its wake in order to survive. According to Marx (cited in Appadurai, 1986:8), commodities emerge in the economic conditions of capitalism. That only in the context of exchange do products become commodities. It is only in and through the commodities that there is a possibility of profit, accumulation. The elite section of the middle class translates the hegemony of the ruling bloc into the language of legitimation. It specializes in production of ideologies and the mass section "engages in exemplary consumption" of these ideologies, thus investing them with legitimacy.

The forms of entertainment and leisure overlap and are the visible markers of social status.

Another activity of leisure has been the splurge of new clubs that have come up in the recent years in the city, which caters to the middle class and the upper class. Clubs, which were a mark of higher status in the past, are a common feature in the present day world of the leisure industry. For Gayatri, 73, the club is the most important source of socializing. Also, memberships in these clubs means an exclusive group formation, which becomes a status group.

Sometimes when I go to the Secunderabad club I buy my store from there. I go for my reading. Apart from my daily newspaper I don't buy any magazines. We get magazines in the club. Twice a week I make it a point to go to the club. And even eating I feel, its cheaper than in a five star hotel. If I don't feel like cooking in the evening I collect something and come. I am not fond of playing cards. I love to sit and read. That is one place where we like to go and club library is beautiful. They have some real good books. Every new book that's published, you'll find it there. We read mostly biographies. (Gayatri, 73, Interview 1999)

A generation later is Sudhir- Gayatri and Raghav's son for whom it's the media – the Internet at work and at home, which takes up a lot of his time. Leisure time at home and work- both enable a connectivity, which creates the context for better involvement in the world at large. Without it, the functioning of the whole industry seems impossible. It is the media, which also links the cultural aspect of one,'s dressing to the final purchase in a store. Brand names are a big draw with the upper middle class for whom the 'name' of the product is everything. It signifies the best possible that money can buy.

I read but not much. I see it on the web and so all the data is electronic. India Today is a weekly so it means I get to read the news on the eighth day instead of

the first. It has no meaning today. I am connected to the PC every minute. So suppose there is some hijack, the news is all online. My newspaper reading is going down drastically. My media reading is 99 per cent on the PC, newspaper is one per cent. I read it only for advertisements. I open the paper to see the ads really. It interests me to know what cars are coming out. What new features. I might go to a showroom and drive it and see it also. It does not cost me anything. When I was growing up the evening time was for playing. Today there is computer, pool, and bowling. The kids have a choice. In shoes we had only Bata and Corona, now we have many brands. We are paying for the name. When you look at an arrow shirt or a Peter England you can see the quality difference. The same arrow shirt, if you remove the name then it will cost less 50 per cent less. Suppose instead of arrow there is Chermas (local brand) on the shirt for Rs.1000 nobody will buy. But you have to fit into the environment. I cannot justify not wearing it. I have to. (Sudhir, 38, Interview 1999)

For Roshan and Sheela media is linked to leisure and family time. Unlike the leisure of the lower middle class, which is linked to family time directly, leisure for the upper middle class is mediated through the television. And the media speaks the language of capital.

Probably two hours everyday we watch TV. It's a ritual for us in the night. We watch the serials on star plus from 10- 11 pm very religiously. It has gotten into our system. The things that I like about them are strong religious values, family values but so much time is wasted. We just want to unwind ourselves so we watch it. We definitely like the sets and the furniture. They are unique. I would like to do something similar in some part of my house. (Sheela, 40, Interview 2000)

Desire is a product of a feeling of lack, a want. Its desire that enables the circulation of capital. The global capital in all its pervasive form is visible in the public domains of the market, the entertainment industry i.e. the theme parks, clubs, resorts; the malls –with stores for the personal and for the home. For Roshan and Sheela, TV is about family bonding but the whole experience of the global is when you have the media, shopping and leisure entangled in the commodity language, which is intelligible only in the language of capital.

## 6. Conclusion

Traversing between the different segments within the middle class, one finds interesting consumption practices. As one climbs the social ladder, expenditure on the superficial increases and the money spent on the food based subsistence purposes decreases. The expressive essence of the consumer class has always been there among the Indian middle class even before globalization. In that sense globalization has been about economic change and social change. The economic forces of globalization have given this 'essence' a new lift.

As one noted, Campbell (Corrigan 1997:2) regards the working class as fundamental to the development of production forces during industrial revolution and it is the readers of the novel or the print media who are the fundamental requirement for the development of a consumer revolution. In the present context, one can say the middle class became the fundamental requirement for the consumer revolution in India. The middle class is the prime 'work force' in the global economy of India today; it is also the primary consumer, the legitimizer of the changes that the ruling block has started. The middle class with its large numbers and the different range of income levels is diverse in many ways. The upper middle class is with the most money and is the primary consumer, the lower middle class and the middle middle class lend weight to its logic of consumption by themselves consuming, albeit at a far lower level of expenses.

If consumption is, according to Douglas and Isherwood (1996:xiv), an indicator of poverty levels, then the data on middle class accumulated for the requirements of the market, indicate their increased income levels. The disposable incomes are the source of new consumption patterns in India. According to Douglas and Isherwood, it is the extent of a household's involvement in the society, the expenditure on others, which arrived at

requirements of the market. One's employment and education are indicators of one's identity and often suggest a constant dialogue with modernity. Education and work are a means to secure 'cultural capital'. Careers of the middle class are according to the demands of the job market. Nevertheless, it is not the case with lower middle class and middle middle class for whom careers range from government employment to teaching in a private school. If a government job was the trademark of success for the middle class during the immediate post-independence period, it served the purpose of binding the sentiment of nation-building. It was the notion of development on the path to a modern nation, which completed the narrative for the middle class 'jobs' in the government sector. This has begun to change from about the late 1980s and early 1990s. A family of retired government servants has progressively taken up better jobs. In this sense, capital transformations of the previous generation in a family have moved from investing for find opportunities in a government job to jobs in a multinational company. This indicates that the notion of increasing one's property base from that of the earlier generation has been a critical development.

One cannot measure the descriptive enhancements of a career in detail here, but the one obvious fact is the level of income, which is ten times more than that of the previous generation. This is an enabling factor in the process of transformation of the 'citizen-subject' orientation of a middle class person to becoming a 'consumer-subject'. The incomes in the previous generations were used for saving for the future whereas the present income levels have a cache of disposable income, which instructs the owner to spend more and more. The move from a production to a consumption regime is made complete with this aspect of increased income levels. Consumption practices or a new array of expenditure patterns are produced by the culture industry for the middle class to consume. It is this system of consumption, which puts the capitalist forces of

by looking at their consumption patterns, which gives an account of their poverty levels. More the expenditure on the non-food category or the social expenditure, the better off the household. The research by NSSO focused on expenditure patterns of households, which in turn, were used to decipher the changes in subsistence levels of consumption. A household's surplus, is being used more and more for non-food purchases. This has increased one hundred per cent since 1970s and the money spent on food has reduced many times over. Consumption back then was only a part of the lifecycle process, a normal outcome of production. From a concern toward the citizen's welfare, the government has made the consumer its new subject. It makes the citizen fit into the mould of the consumer. This transition is made possible through the various mechanisms of the media and culture. Television is the new visual regime that serves as the most important link between the people and the economy.

The middle class is the focus of all activity. It is the consumer in all its various avatars. The lower middle class, the middle middle class, and the upper middle class are all catered to as consumers of the market forces. It is they who have the disposable income with the capacity to spend continuously if not copiously. This means that there is a range of products out there in the market which seduce the consumers to buy and buy some more. Consumption is about the tangible goods and the intangible part of culture- the idea of a vacation, a comfortable home, good education, mall hopping, consuming television, and the Net, and also saving to spend more in the future. These new avenues of consumption have been added to the culture of consumption. Consumption hence, has acquired a new meaning and a new force.

The career choices have changed since the onset of liberalization and this is due to the demands and workings of global capital. It is the upper middle class, which expressly caters to the up market jobs and is in constant touch with the trends and

domination into the foray of the 'cultural' and makes for a routinized process of accumulation. Capitalism in that sense finds its showground for accumulation in the cultural realm.

An average pay packet of the upper middle class is almost a hundred times more than the pay packet of the lower middle class. There is an anomaly in terms of clubbing such drastic extremes in income patterns. Nevertheless, the oddity of such an attempt is also questioned in the present study. For the upper middle class money spent on food at home is far less than money spent on anything else while for the lower middle class all the income goes into food for survival or for the roof over the head. Income levels in all sections of the middle class have gone up considerably, but so have their expenditure patterns. If the previous generation of upper middle class looked at saving for a government job and a good education, this generation looks at saving for the daughter's education abroad and an extravagant wedding too. For the middle middle class and the lower middle class there is a slow move toward the symbolic and aesthetic aspects of their houses. Those who could not afford to eat out at all four years ago, so that they could save for a bus ticket are now able to think of taking the daughter out for an ice-cream. The expenditure patterns of a household similarly focuses on the superficial, the symbolic, which are beyond the necessary elements of subsistence. The previous generation of people in the government sector primarily focused their expenditure patterns around two items: daughter's marriage and son's education. This has undergone a change to a daughter's education as well as marriage. The former consumption patterns centered on the traditional aspects of weddings, festivals have only been taken to a more complex level where *dépense* includes the symbolic of the new order. The symbolic now includes the American, the traditional, and the ordinary.

What has changed in the process of shopping is played out quite elaborately and imaginatively in the crossover lines between the market and the middle class. Traditional cultural forms of celebration have been usurped by the market and taken over to serve the purpose of capitalist accumulation. Shopping has become an experience in itself, a practice of leisure, a process to unwind. There are layers of meaning attached to the shopping experience, which take into consideration each individual shopper- the teenager, the mother, the woman, and the man. The upper middle class in India is like a global consumer, in the market for the international brand names. Shopping is a means to refurbish the latest styles and trends and a means to kill time. Habitual and occasional shopping has been replaced with weekend shopping where one buys something whether one needs it or not. The stores provide a discount throughout the year and not just during festival times like before. As Holt (2004) would have it, “media may shift, but the principles for constructing valued myths (*about consumption*) are enduring (226)”.

For the middle middle class and the lower middle class, shopping is mostly and only during the festival times. Their shopping ‘periodicities’ are around a festival or a social event like a wedding or a rites of passage ceremony. This is in a sense need-based shopping. According to Bourdieu, as one climbs the social ladder, the symbolic becomes stronger. The middle class is more inclined toward the symbolic. But with the *dépense* during festival times and other ritual periods of the year, expenditure patterns of the lower class is said to be twice as much as a given month’s income. (Rao, 2000) Thus, the symbolic nature of shopping is not the novelty in the present times; it is the magnitude of shopping which is amazing. For Appadurai (1997:67-68), expenditure is part of consumption which is why it is “habitual”. According to him, the habitual nature of consumption is the force behind all the new forms of expenditure.

For Baudrillard (1998:75-76), it is consumption in the cultural realm which stabilizes capitalism. Capital needs culture in order to sustain itself. Consumption is part of the 'organized extension' of the productive forces. According to Goux (1996:202), production is always accompanied by another kind of production, which is production of desire. For Goux, it is the process of production of desire, which is what creates real value. Advertisements are the texts where economy and culture overlap to produce value. An object and its appearance are detached from each other at the level of advertisements. (Haug, 1986:16) This process of creation of meaning via advertisements is what creates value.

The requirements of an economy at the beginning of industrial revolution were a huge working class with its focus on production, and now, the requirements of a consumer revolution are not the working class but the middle class- the "cultural entrepreneurs" (Joshi 2003:2-22). It is the middle class, which is sufficiently detached from manual labor and capital and has the space for leisure. The middle class is the axle upon which the growth of and development of late capitalism is being made possible in this era of globalization in India.

The concept of leisure as a way to relaxing is another kind of consumption after involvement in production. Work is, according to Simmel, an organic connection to the world whereas leisure is a non-organic or a developed and refined relation to the world. One is natural the other is cultural. Leisure for the upper middle class is to do with shopping, reading, traveling, socializing.

There seems to be a sharp divide in the way leisure is looked at within the middle class. For some it is cooking, taking a long drive, stitching, socializing with the community, or just plain spending time with children. This kind of leisure lacks a crucial element i.e., capital. On the other hand, these categories are not part of the larger

process of cultural intervention of capitalist accumulation process in the form of the 'culture industry'. The other categories of leisure, like shopping, traveling to Singapore, playing pool, and going to the club are grouped under the entertainment industry- the cultural arm of capitalism. The crucial element missing in the former category is capital where one could still have leisure pursuits without the requirement of any money. The idea that capital needs culture for its survival in its advanced stages gets re-confirmed.

Pre-globalization phase, the leisure industry was only a byproduct of the economy. It comprised of the allowances (leave travel compensation- LTC) that a government employee received as part of one's income, which was the major element of leisure travel. The focus of the economy from production to consumption has taken in its fold different aspects of culture to make it into a capital-intensive enterprise.

For the lower middle class, leisure is not linked to any of the capital intensive services of the entertainment industry, save for an odd movie once in a few months. Leisure for the lower middle class is about spending time with the family. Family is however the centre of all leisure activity among all the respondents.

It is clear that the media is a large influence in the lives of upper middle class in the sense of shopping, traveling, and being a good consumer. The upper middle class passionately devours what the media has to offer. As one goes up the class ladder, technology mediates life and here it is the television, which mediates life.

For the lower middle class and the middle middle class, the media brings the world into the home and in that sense; the home is a place of leisure. Watching television is one of the many ways of spending time with the family. Another favorite with the women respondents is reading which creates the private space for the women away from work and families. For Appadurai, consumption is the "work of the imagination" (1997:5). It is the process of 'eating' and 'devouring' or rather, consuming

which gives imagination its food for thought. The consumption of similar kinds of media- books, television serials and other related media- create 'communities of sentiment' (p.8). Advertisements are the medium of desire. The material world takes on a new meaning once it passes the mechanical processes of the various media. 'Things' and products acquire a new appearance in the context of the new media. It is these, which produce consumers and take consumption to a mediated level where the previous habits of consumption are transformed largely. Media consumption in that sense is about production of the aesthetic sensibilities and production of desire. Aesthetic production is an industry by itself with the function of cultural production.

As Fernandes (2000:612) points out "...images weave together the symbolic fabric of a hegemonic political culture in a liberalizing India. And that the imagined form of the global is itself produced through cultural signs and symbols that rest on the deployment of the nationalist narratives". Therefore, the imagined form of the global is in the narrative of the nation. The nation was read in the economy before the phase of liberalization in the narrative of development. Now the nation is projected on and through the commodity form in the strong narrative of consumption. Advertisements in being real products of work reflect the imaginary. They are the concrete examples of a relation between economy and culture. In the field of the 'imaginary' world (media), they reflect what is real. According to Rajagopal (2002:71), "circulation of images enables circulation of capital, pushes it to another level, and deepens the reach of production of value".

The nation in the post-independence era was envisaged in the context of the economy. It was development of the nation, which took precedence over and above the regional, caste, class, or religious frames of reference. Such a wide scale project of 'nation building' necessarily required a non-partisan and broad-based hegemonic

struggle. The 'need of the hour' was to build the nation, reduce poverty through education, employment, and planning. The five-year plans were tools that had a beginning and an end. These became the stories of successes upon which more planning was taken up. The failures were also spelt out along with the explanations. In this work of nation building, the middle class was the protagonist. Hegemonic struggle of the kind in post-independence India, primarily involved the middle class.

Globalization involves the middle class again in a new schema of things. If the ideology of development carried with it the economic process of production as its principle approach to modernity, then the ideology of globalization brought with it the value of consumption, the process of consuming as another path to modernity. In this process, it is the nation, which is made the commodity form upon which the idea of consumption is sold to the middle class consumers.

Consumption is the ideology, which is communicated through the visual regime of the electronic media like television, Internet, movies, and the like. It is the advertisements of various commodities and the associated ideas of social mobility, which is an aspiration for the middle class in India. The middle class is at the core of the process of revisioning of the Indian nation in the context of globalization. Consumption and globalisation are the elements that overlap in the lives of middle class people in India. It is impossible to talk of only one without mentioning the other because both are two sides of the same coin.

### **Whither middle class?**

The middle class is burgeoning in numbers at a considerably high rate. The lower middle class and the middle middle class is the next big 'market' in the Indian economy.

One has already witnessed a move to consumption in the middle class. The upper middle class in that sense is the cosmopolitan world citizen.

The market is setting up its periodicities in terms of shopping cycles. Apart from the traditional avenues and periods of shopping during festival time, it provides for new consumption routines. Consumption of leisure, shopping, careers, and life worlds take a postmodern turn, where the quirky and the eccentric co-exist along with the traditional. The new Indian consumer is looking at international travel where there are no limits to the horizon. The upper middle class is a global consumer in a total way. The first world market is the market of the upper middle class.

### **Further research**

As a category for research, the middle class offers a variety of contexts that can be taken up for study. Some of these are: an ethnographic analysis of women shoppers and what is it that brings them back to the shops. This is seen in the increased focus of the capitalist market on women shopper and keeping them out of the sphere of 'work' and in the 'cultural' realm to subvert the possibility of an equal society.

The increased commercialization of every aspect of life brings into focus the sharp rise in domestic labor, which supports the life of the middle class. In that sense the commoditization of labor is seen in newer forms. Various aspects of family life are segmented and bought for a price from the domestic labor. It is this labor, which is taking on the functions of a nanny, the cook, the masseur, and the paid social partner.

Economic changes as instanced in India situate the concept of 'anomie' where extreme normlessness is the norm. This leads us to the role of family as providing stability in a society wrought with instability. The role of women in being the caregivers

to children and that of stress-management also keeps them out of work in order to take care of the whole family. Economic compulsions notwithstanding, there might be an opting out of the workforce and a willing downgrading of lifestyles to accommodate a single income. Patriarchal notions of the woman taking care of the family are only reinvented in this global scape.

## Appendix

### *Interview Guide*

The following questions were used as part of the interview bank and based on the comfort level of the conversation; they were put forth to different respondents. The following are the broad parameters of the questions.

- Routines and daily activities

How does your normal day begin? What is your routine like? Which is the most important part of your daily activity? (Cooking, children, work) what about time for yourself? When do you get time for yourself? What do you do? What would you rather do? What takes up most of your time? Have there been great changes in your life? In what ways? What would you like to change in your daily routine- given a good chance?

- Shopping

Where do you shop? What about shopping for a household item like a mixer, or a nail polish. Where do you go? Where do you find them first before you decide to buy? Compare shopping five to eight years back and now. How is it helpful to shop in these areas and not others? Have you been to the new shopping areas? Who told you about these? How often do you shop for your clothes? Is it around festival times?

- Things at home

What does it mean to decorate the house this way? Where was this object bought? Why there and not some place else? Why wooden furniture and not molded plastic furniture and vice versa for another family. What does it mean to have it in the way it is now? Tell me of something (expensive) you have bought recently. Why did you buy it?

- Leisure

Do you watch TV? How often? What do you watch? Why? Did somebody tell you about it or you saw it yourself? Who has the remote control and why? What is the most

important time with/in your family? Do you read books, magazines? Novels? Do you watch advertisements or flip channels when there is an ad? Recall an ad and describe it. Do you like it? Why? Do you buy something after watching an ad? What was it- if ever? First time air travel- if ever. Have you been to the new game parlors, pool parlors? SL World, Ocean Park? How are they? How often do you go there? Why? Do you eat out? How often is that? Which one do you prefer- home cooked food or restaurant food? Why? Isn't it expensive? How much is okay? What does it mean to eat out?

Have you been on a vacation recently? Where? How often do you go? Have you tried the tour packages? Alternatively, is it an LTC from office? Why that place? Who told you about it? Have you gone abroad? When? Why? Alternatively, do you want to go abroad? Why? What does it mean to go abroad? Would you have thought about it a few years back? Travel within India, where your trains/buses first class, or second class?

Books: what kind of books do you read? What is the source of these books? Do you go to a movie? Have these been your leisure Activities always? Alternatively, recent developments? Who goes with you?

- Expenditure patterns

What kind of savings do you have now? For what are they primarily meant for. Have your expenses increased in the last few years? How? Apart from inflationary increases, do you think you are spending more? On what kind of items? Why? Are you saving the same kind of money like always? Have your savings gone up? Which is the most expensive thing these days?

- Personal Life history

Children, desires and aspirations, achievements and futures. What were your aspirations while at school/college? Do you think you have achieved them? Achieved something? What kind of futures do you visualize for yourself and your children?

As an individual, would you like to change something in your life? –given a good chance that it will happen. As an individual, would you like to change something in your life? Given a good chance of it happening.

If you were to get a lottery, what's the one thing you want to change. Why? (This idea pertains to their aspirations and how they get reflected in a question like this. Despite the fact that this is a hypothetical question, it helped me understand a lot more of these personalities and viewpoints.)

To the women respondents: Do you watch TV? Do you get free time for yourself? What do you do? Has your free time increased or decreased recently? Do the extra gadgets save your time? Do you use all the gadgets? Do you operate them yourself? Why? Not the servants? Do you like what you are doing? (working/staying home) given a chance to opt out, would you do it? i.e. stay home or work.

Do you entertain at home? Do you cook or buy food for the party? What do you prefer? Given a choice is there something that you would like to change in your life? Buy something? Go some place? Why? If you were to get a lottery, what is the one thing you want to change? Why? (This idea pertains to their aspirations and how they get reflected in a question like this. Despite the fact that this is a hypothetical question, it helped me understand a lot more of these personalities and viewpoints.)

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