Research Paper

Towards An Understanding of the New Middle Classes In India: A Social-Cultural Perspective

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ABSTRACT: *One of the most distinguishing features of contemporary India is the emergence and rise of the new middle class/es (hereafter NMC). After 1990s liberalization, the NMC became the focus of attention due to its socio-economic mobility, socio-cultural and political influence and consumer potential. The confident and ambitious NMC has sprouted up across the country with about 300-400 million people and increasing rapidly.*
The purpose of the present article is to demonstrate that the emerging NMC is relatively an unexploredand comparatively new contextual urban reality and a group which is fluid and still emerging.
Through an analysis of the NMC and it's economic and socio-cultural distinctiveness, the article shows its emergence and ongoing transformation on the backdrop of the mid-1980s and the 1990s neo-liberalization. It further argues that how further socio-political and cultural deliberations are required to adequatelyunderstand and engage with the NMC both India and abroad as a sizable majority of the NMC are transnational and globally represents Indian diaspora in the UAE, the USA, Europe, and a few other countries.
KEYWORDS: *Urbanization, Neoliberalization, New Middle class, urban family, professionals, middle class predicament and development,*

I. INTRODUCTION

For the first time in human history, more than half of the world is middle class.[1]One of the most distinguishing features of contemporary India is the emergence and rise of new middle class/es[2] (henceforth NMC). Today, the NMC is the fastest growing segment of the Indian population.[3]Madhukar Sabnavis asserts that the "big Indian middle class" is anywhere between 300 to 400 million and growing.[4]By all reasonable estimates, Indian middle class is bigger than the entire population of many nations.[5]The middle class especially the new middle class which is categorizedon the basis of income, social status, education level, occupation, and consumerism has significantly emerged as a powerful, influential and dominant class in urban India and largely determines India's economy, polity, culture, education and social relationships.

There is no unanimity in understanding the NMC as it is contemporary, fluid and still emerging. The contours of the NMC are increasingly perceived as a "class-in-practice," which is markedby its economic mobility, politics and the regular practices through which it reconstructs its affluent position. It is maintained that the NMC is a tangible and noteworthy phenomenon; however, its boundaries are recurrently being defined and tested. Moreover, there are different NMC categories which are different from the NMCs in other parts of the world especially North America and Europe. Understanding the NMC is further complicated by caste structure in India and its dominance in the class system. The recent urbanization, globalization, and postmodernism have significantly influenced the NMCs in transforming their culture, religious beliefs and overall socio-economic and cultural dimensions.

The present paper is an attempt tounderstand the NMCs and their present sociological as well as religious reality in relation to socio-cultural implications. To provide clarity towards understanding the NMC

various definitions, spiritual nature, upward mobility and NMCs distinct characteristics have been assessed.Further, it also attempts to articulate the class and caste relationship, and its recent cultural and religious shifts.

1.1The Emergence of the NMC: History in Perspective

Karl Marx and Max Weber, classical sociological thinkers, wrote a great deal on class in an analysis of human history and sociology.

In the 19th and the early parts of the 20[th]century, the middle classes in India perhaps began to emerge strongly during British reign and in context of educational and new job opportunities and upward economic mobility. Sanjeeb Mukherjee rightly asserts that Colonialism and Capitalist developments gave rise to dominant all-India classes.[6] British rule made inroads to a capitalist economy while establishing a new administrative system and promoting English education which resulted in a tiny educated class in urban areas.[7] Thus, the NMCs emerged in collaboration with the agencies of British rule, English-education and new administrative, law and commerce employment opportunities.

Today, the NMCs and their prominence are mainly resulted from the mid-1980s and the 1990s liberalization and open economy policies of the then Indian government.

In contemporary literature, the NMC emerges in the background of the discourses on economic liberalization[8]. Mainstream economists and policy-makers have deliberated on this and have contended that the augmentation of this new economy was interrelated to the expansion of the urban middle class, referring to this as the 'new' middle class.[9] Besides that, various media agency and academicians contributed to the development of a distinct portrayal of a "new" Indian middle class, "one that has left behind its dependence on austerity and state protection and has embraced an open India that is at ease with broader processes of globalization"[10] (Fernandes 90). The NMCs are currently considered to be intimately linked and seem to be the primary beneficiary of this new economy.

Liberalization according to Aiyar is the philosophy of modernization in India[11] which brought both economic social and political changes. Pavan Varma claims that liberalization paved the way for selfish individualism where the austereforms of life are replaced by consumerism that is increasingly reflected in the self-seeking actions of the NMCs and others.[12] Indeed, liberalization significantly not only improved Indian economy, educational opportunities, both locally and globally, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) rise but also paved the way to upward mobility to hundreds of thousands of Indians especially, the NMC. Eventually, after 1991, a focus on the NMC began to take place as the NMCs soon became the prime movers of economic growth, consumerism and global expansion of the NMC.

1.2 The NMC: Concept and Various Definitions

The NMCs are categorized in several different ways by different scholars and sociologists. Darendorf explaining this group notes that there is no word in modern language to describe this group, for they are "a group that is no group, class that is no class and stratum that is no stratum. They are located somewhere between at least two other classes, one above, one below it."[13] In other words, more generically, the middle class has attained a place between upper and lower classes.

Today, 'middle class' is defined and expressed in various terms. Bibek Debroy in *Indian Express* defines states:

The 'middle class' is an over-used expression and difficult to pin down, since it is defined not just in terms of income, but also as values, cultural affinities, lifestyles, educational attainments and service sector employment. Using income, one way of defining a middle class is in terms of how much of income is left over for discretionary expenditure, after paying for food and shelter. If more than one-third is left, that qualifies one for inclusion in the 'middle class.'[14]

For a few others, the middle class/es are those who have emerged because of such social mobility and status attainment [15]

II.   THE NMC AND CASTES IN CONTEMPORARY URBAN INDIA

The contemporary Indian society is undergoing significant changes. One of the crucial change is a slow but steady erosion of the caste system.[16] In contemporary scenario, a person's status is assessedon the basis of his education, occupation, and income, and caste is considered only during the time of marriage.[17] Raj Gandhi further asserts, "If one wants to discern the direction of change in the social stratification of urban India, the most logical step is to think in terms of change from caste to class."[18]Today cities are becoming increasingly individualistic promoting the class identity, status and relationships. Although it is a welcoming change, it has not profoundly penetrated India's social system and dynamics.

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2.1 Upper Caste Dominance

The NMCs are a heterogeneous group, but due to strong caste hold, it is primarily dominated by the upper castes. V.T. Rajshekar exposes uppercaste and remarks that they undoubtedly dominated the lower classes and is shy of admitting this fact which made them rulers.[19] The Brahmanical tradition approves the minority, influential high caste people to rule over most of powerless low caste.[20] Similarly, G.K. Karanth asserts that the members of the lowercaste, mainly former untouchable and outcaste, find it challenging to move from their stereotyped occupations than the higher castes. He cites reasons such as social, economic and political pressures exerted by the upper castes to continue the conventional 'patron-client' relations.[21] Consequently, it keeps the lower and middle caste economically dependent on the uppercastes. Thus causing other communities to lag in terms of educational and occupational attainment, political participation and upward social mobility.

2.2. Upward Mobility: Change and Continuity

Historically, caste is associated with particular occupations, and any progress in caste mobility from its inherited occupation to another is a form of social mobility only within the caste structure.Though the NMC had traditionally been dominated by the higher castes but in urban India primarily due to enhanced educational opportunities and upward economicmobility, it seems be a reduced factual.

M.N. Panini foresees economic liberalization, in the long run, to increase job opportunities to such an extent that workers do not have to ply their caste background to get jobs.[22] The caste occupations are perhaps eroding due to urbanization, globalization, and modernization which has resulted in multiple job opportunities outside their traditional occupations, both locally and globally, particularly in private, ITC and related sectors. Conversely, caste continues to 'cluster' in particular occupations, in higher levels of government services like managerial and professional occupations, and in the 'industrial milieu' between the organized and unorganized sector.[23]However, economic liberalization and educational opportunities for the lower caste/class and social changes catalyzedsocio-economic mobility upward. Such change has not actually diminished the firm hold of caste.

III.   THE NMC CATEGORIES

According to B.B. Misra, the middle class has an occupationalinterest but bound together by a typical style of living and behavior pattern and stand for democratic values which they express in their social and political conduct.[24] Moreover, the NMCs are classified into different groups or categories by different sociologists. Bhagavan Prasad divides NMC's into four groups using occupation: 1. Salaried persons, including administrative employee, postal and other institutional and government officials; 2.Independent professions like medical practitioners, lawyers, armed forces officers, teachers, artists, actors, journalists and other consultants; 3. The non – salaried such as those involved in entrepreneurial or business activities like a private business, directors in business firms; 4.Retired persons and widows from wealthy families.[25] Income, social status, consumerism and lifestyle are few other key criterion used to categories the NMCs in India.

Furthermore, the NMC comprises of people from all spheres of social structure though Hindus percentage is on the higher side compared to other social groups. According to Sudeshna Maitra, Muslims and Christians form a more substantial segment of the lower class (18% and 11% respectively) than the middle and upper classes (15% and 4% of the middle class and 10% and 4% of the upper class)[26] The recent economic developments are significant for Christians too as sizeable portion made substantial socio-economic progress during last two-three decades.

3.1 The NMC Characteristics

The NMCs are recognizedon the basis of their earning, majorly derived from the higher and middle castes. In contemporary globalization era, dual-earning couples have increased among the NMC. Besides, increasing percentage of women and youth representation in private and IT-related sector is observed, who are increasingly global in their lifestyle and overall outlook. It is not surprising then that the NMCs are evolving themselves in modernity, socio-economic developments, western/modern culture with a greater emphasis on education, consumerism and new global work and business partnerships.

Here are a few key characteristics of the NMCs:

3.1.1 Proficient in English

Today, India is perhaps the second most significant English speaking country after the USA. According to Gurcharan Das, English is avidly embraced by the newly emerging middle classes; this new popular idiom of

the market is rushing down the socio-economic ladder.[27] Indeed, English is considered a sure path for upward mobility and success.

The NMC, mainly, the IT and related sector professionals, are increasingly seen to aspire international job opportunities and immigration to the developed countries and have developed a global worldview while embracing technological advancement and advanced language skills and expertise.

3.1.2 Increasingly Consumerists Lifestyle and Identity

The NMC is increasingly identified especially by marketing experts as a "Consuming Class."[28]Indicus Analytics Research of Wall Street Journal states the consumption power of NMC's in India:

By market size, the largest new middle-class markets are in the main cities, with Delhi in the first place, followed by Mumbai, Ahmadabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Kolkata, and Pune. There are also other attractive markets that are on the second rung and whose middle class spends between Rs.5, 000 croresand Rs10, 000 crores a year.[29]

The NMCs are perhaps the most significant consumers of high-end goods such as cars, air conditioners, designer clothes, computers, mobiles, gadgets and much more. Today consumption has become their lifestyle and identity.

3.1.3 Technology Savvy: 'Knowledge Class'

The NMCs are also called as 'knowledge class' because of their specialized, advanced education and technological expertise and much more. Their dependence on technological gadgets like mobile phones, internet, laptops, iPod, tablets, etc. is exceptional and proves how this class is conversant, learned and exposed to new and modern technology.

The Indian IT industry has become the new great white hope of the Indian middle class.[30] IT entrepreneurs and professionals are considered new middle-class heroes.[31] Das even proposes that India can leapfrog the industrial age while embracing information technology that can drive India's economic growth and transform the country.[32]

3.1.4 Aspirational and Career Oriented

The NMCs perspective about overall life is increasingly money centered. What Robert Wuthnow has written about American *middleclass* categorically applies to the NMCs in India. He states:

The distinguishing feature of the middle class is its obsession with work and money.This is not to say that the poor and wealthy are uninterested in either; many of the poor are gainfully employed and desperately concerned with making ends meet, and many of the wealthy have earned their riches and work hard at protecting their investments. But the middle class is fundamentally defined by its pursuit of careers, the preparation of its children to participate in the labour market, and the close connection between its material well-being and its values.[33]

The NMCs, their upbringing, and enculturation have tuned them to the single-minded pursuit of material successandcareer growth for the acquisition of comfortable lifestyle, more wealth and prestige.

3.1.5 More Globalized than Localized

The NMC undoubtedly favor economic liberalization and globalization andconsiders it to develop the economy and individual prosperity.

The NMCs maintain professional lifestyle, are fast-paced, demand a modern and western standard of living and have a keen global perspective. Most of the NMCs are exposed to global culture, modern worldviews, international education, consumer products, and market economy, thus are increasingly globalized. Besides, they are well connected with the world through media, electronics and technology. Incidentally, the NMCs are emerging as a transnational and a global phenomenon. Their immigration and aspiration to follow western and modern culture, fashion, lifestyle are remarkable. However, in such cultural and socio-economic globalization, segments of the NMC seem to balance between global and local realities while keeping tightrope balance between new and old, modern and traditional.

3.1.6 The NMC Culture and Society

The NMC culture is an amalgamation and melting pot of cultures, mingling global and local cultural and political influences. Though the modern culture is evolving, below the surface it is flawed by caste, Indian traditions and culture especially in marriages, family relationships, work ethics, politics, and mainly government

and public services. The NMCs social life is primarily determined by occupation and profession, economic status and lifestyle.

However, urbanization, globalization and Western influences are fostering individualism, inter-caste marriages, live-in relationships, and much more. This has led to noticeable shifts in thinking patterns, family and spouse relationships, lifestyle and cultural norms.[34] Cities much like the rest of India maintains a tight-rope balance between modernity and age-old Indian customs and traditions. However, urban spaces are gradually losing its old culture and tradition bit by bit.

Moreover, although the NMCs are economically self-sufficient and enjoy a good life with relatively stable income, health facilities, luxuries and so forth, they have deeper personal, family and work-related needs that usually go unnoticed. Stress levels are high in urban life, loneliness, competitiveness, relationship crisis, and failures, spiritual and emotional struggles, health issues, frustrations are some of the areas where the NMCs find themselves in need of love, support and care. The increasing rates in divorce and suicide, family breakdown, youth-related issues, old age issues, child care, thehighcost of living and medical and work-related stress are some of the crucial issues that majority of the NMCs face.

3.1.7 The NMCs Worldviews

The NMCs worldviews are different from other classes and are changing rapidly due to various factors. L.W. Bryce asserts that urbanization brings cultural change in the ways of thinking, lifestyle, and the point of view.[35] The NMC has changed over the years though there are tension and some continuity of old traditions, beliefs, and lifestyle.

3.1.7.1 The NMCs Shift towards Secularism and Pragmatism

The NMCs who are predominantly English educated, often in private and even international schools and colleges, are profoundly impacted by the western, scientific, secular and 'enlightenment' ideologies and worldviews. Consequently, this has had far-reaching influence on the NMCs political consciousness, religious beliefs, gender relationships and other such perspectives.

Moreover, segments of the NMC who are secular, are primarily concerned with the matters of this world as they strive to bypass religion. Besides, it is a process which brings gradual changes in the thinking and practices of people which are seen among the NMCs who are more exposed to secular ideals and practices. In this respect, the NMC hasundoubtedly become more secular although not all segments of it and not in equal measures. The NMCs who are influenced by western education and modernity are also exposed to liberal, secular and rational concepts and morals. However, they keep themselves rooted in traditional and religious social structure.[36]

According to Robert B. Talisse, Scott F. Aikin, the terms pragmatism or pragmatic is usually used to denote:

> …a commitment to success in practical affairs, to 'getting things done.' Pragmatists are driven not by principle, but by the desire to achieve their ends. Hence pragmatists have little interest in abstraction, idealization, nitpicking argument, or theory of any sort; they have no time for these because they are fixed on practical tasks. A pragmatist is hence a bargainer, a negotiator, a doer, rather than a seeker of truth, a wonderer, or a thinker.[37]

Likewise, "what works for me, is right," is the way of life for most of the NMCs and they tend to judge everything from that perspective. What appeals to intellect is only accepted as most of them tend to evaluate everything by relevance and applicability to their felt needs and aspirations.

3.2 The NMCs Spirituality and Religious Diversity

Urban India, represents a multitude of spiritualities and Indian sects along with other religions, cults and religious groups. It is evident that religion has a prominent place and plays a vital role in many cities in India. However, Hinduism is dominant. It is generally perceived that in cities people are not religious, however, the NMCs though not very religious in strict terms, they do adhere to their religious faith and spirituality. It has been observed that in recent times, the NMCs prefer to be referred as spiritual rather than religious. In the quest to become spiritual they are in search of spirituality which will cater to their felt needs, provide solutions for their questions and miraculous provision to their aspirations.

Religion has significant appeal and reverence amongst Indians. Family life and its socio-cultural and religious practices influences and shapes the child's development in cognizance of self-identity, god and

society[38] and continues to have an influential role in the family set up. Today, a large number of religious, cultural, philosophical and spiritual institutions and various ideologies are practiced by the NMCs along with their traditional Hindu faith and temple worship. The differentsacred places like Sri Satya Sai Baba Ashram, the ISKCON temple, OSHO ashram, *Yoga*centers, *Sri Sri* Ravi Shankar's *Art of Living* and many such centers have also become famous destinations not only among the NMCs but for people from all over the world. Raj Gandhi argues on the popularity of religion in cities contending, "it is futile to argue that religion is disappearing from Indian cities."[39] These and many other neo-Hindu movements are reviving traditional Hinduism as well as creating a renewed interest among Hindus both in India and several other countries.

3.2.1 NMCs and Anubhava Phenomenon

In contemporary scenario, almost all religions seem to be promoting experiential religious aspects. In case of Hinduism, while presenting a profound belief of such anubhava-experiential spirituality among Hindus, Hoefer states:

Traditional Hindu religiosity emphasizes three sources of authority in discovering the religious truth: *Srti*or ancient writings; *Yukti* or rational thought; and the most important*Anubhava* or experience. The purpose of using *srti*and *yukti*is only to get to one's own*anubhav*—and only then, Hindus believe, do they know the writings and teachings are true…An Indian seeker will commonly want confirmation through visions, miracles, answered prayers and healings... the Indian drive is for *anubhava*.[40]

The NMCs being pragmatic and seekers of religious vitality and anubhava longs for some divine*anubhava* in their life, career, business, family and so forth. To experience the reality and divine power of god even the NMCs perform various rituals, *poojas*, and *bhakti,* besides, following various*gurus*, pilgrimage, holy bath and several such religious things.

Thus, we may construe that Hindu faith is being redefined and has not lost the influence among the NMCs. The popularity of neo-Hinduism[41] and guru movement among the NMCs is noteworthy to indicate that Hindu faith endures to flourish although the methods of worship and teachings have undergone several changes over time. However, their reasoning and rationality, secular and pragmatic nature and openness is indicative that they can be guided in a right direction and for the betterment of one's life, family and society.

IV. SOCIO-CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES

The social change in the Indian subcontinent has arisen due to various reasons. According to Ram Ahuja, Indian society is moving towards anarchy and anomie; he ascertains that Inter-religious and inter-caste conflicts in our community have grown and the politics havebeen increasingly religionized. He further contends that religion has been politicizedthough Secularism is on the run and communalism is triumphing. Ahuja further assesses the pattern of socio-cultural and religious changes and the nature of adjustment in sub-systems within Indian society. He also points out the very basis of unity and integrity of the society has been threatened while presenting the emerging trends and identifies the unpredictable and inexplicable changes to follow. However, he asserts that the traditional social systems are not in the process of disintegration though it is finding it complicated to function in old ways; they are adjusting themselves to the changed conditions.[42] In such scenario, it is essential to see how the NMC contributes to social and economic equality and inclusiveness, good governance and religious harmony.

Globalisation has adversely affected health and incurred severe financial costs associated with it. Further, trade liberalization and technological improvements have resulted in changing the economy of a country, however, slowly but steady adversely affecting traditional agricultural communities and allowing economical imports of manufactured goods. This has serious implications as work in the traditional sectors of the economy becomes deficient while more and more people find themselves inadequate for the new kind of jobs and skills required for it.As far as health-related concerns are assessed, we see "increased trade and travel have facilitated the spread of human, animal and plant diseases, like HIV/AIDS, SARS and Bird flu, across borders."[43]

The NMCs migration to a foreign country is appropriately described as a middle-class "craze" or "obsession".Globalization while reducing time and space, infused the high demand for migration to more affluent countries. In India as few other developing countries, this has fostered a 'brain drain' of skilled workers, such as the NMC where highly educated and qualified professionals, such as doctors, engineers and IT specialists, researchers, academicians and several other types of professionals are migrating to developed countries to benefit from the higher wages and more celebrated career and lifestyle prospects.This creates severe skilled labor shortages in developing nations such as India.

After the 1990s liberalization, the globalization studies resulted in extensive engagements and dialogues about the economic, technology, trade and business dimensions which, with few exceptions, focused on the increasing gap between poor and rich and the way in which the lower middle classes did not significantly benefit.[44]Satish Deshpande claims that the middle class- especially its upper, managerial-professional segment—is the principal beneficiary of globalization, and that "much of the celebratory rhetoric about [it] emanates from, and is aimed at, this group."[45]However, sectors of the NMC, particularly the lower and middle tiers of the NMC are economically insolvent and have not significantly benefited by globalization. Moreover, a few segments of the NMC including the upper tier, face a few issues and challenges related to family and religiosity and even with work-related tensions. These challenges and issues have caused stress, health and related issues and unrest in personal, and in the family and work relationships. According to Vinita Pandey, urban living, and its stress is creating tremendous health problems amongst the NMC and others.[46]

The impact of globalization is frequently understood in a binary form, i.e., homogenization or heterogeneity west or east and so forth. However, Shehzad Nadeem, in his thesis, argues that globalization does not "substitute the dynamism of modernity for the complacent solidity of tradition nor the West for the East. Its genius and mystery lay in the balancing of diametric modes," which he calls the overriding principle of hybridity"[47] Such cultural hybridity or intermingling of cultures occurs in diverse ways and changes society over a period. Although the NMCs had traditionally been dominated by casteism, kinship-oriented values, joint family, religious conservatism and traditionalism, this seems less real now. Such changes are significant among the NMCs, who are influenced by modernization, liberalization and urbanization along with globalization. Nandita Chowdhury observes that globalization is "hitching its carriages of old prejudices and attitudes to new engines among the New middle classes."[48] However, such changes are exceptions rather than the rule, in that they have not actually loosened the hold of caste, particularly in marriage relationships, customs, particular religious traditions and institutions and other such socio-cultural aspects that are valued and practiced.

The family pattern of the NMC such as the traditional joint and extended family persists, however, the drift toward the nuclear family is gaining momentum. One of the reasons for the increase in nuclear families in urban areas is the exodus from joint families. The nuclearization of thefamily has implications for the society as well as the future of the family as an institution. Although thenuclear family has several advantages, the slow but steady erosion of 'joint family' will affect in alteration of traditional value system, collectivism, interdependence, kinship relations, functional aspects and so on. This is undoubtedlyresulting in the disintegration of the family as a whole where youth, children, females and all others are affected.[49]

This leads to thefurtherdisintegration of social living arrangements and family environment while allowing independence, isolation, freedom and personal choice that is growing trend among the new generation of the NMC with several adverse consequences. Besides, attitudinal changes, dilapidation of traditional value system, customs, mannerism, that are now overtaken by global values, culture and tendencies.

Another significant factor that is shaping the NMC is materialism. Comparing them with the old middle class, Pavan Varma reprimands the NMC for its self-interested acquisitiveness and the "retreat from idealism" that was a mark of a "traditional middle class" of the earlier, post-independence period.[50] Conversely, Gurcharan Das, even though he agrees with Varma, remarks that the NMC is no 'greedier' than the old one and suggests that the most crucial difference is that the NMC is less hypocritical and more self-assertiveness.[51]

In addition, the NMC morality is changing, and its attitude towards modernity and consumerist culture is dominated mainly by materialistic pleasures, selfish longings and gratification, fashion and the desire to explore newness, whether it is a lifestyle, relationships or anything else. They are moving towards a morality that has no traditional or cultural strings attached although, to a certain extent religious beliefs and teachings can play a role. All religions teach and exhort about charity, care for the poor and one's obligations towards social harmony and welfare. Margit Wessel opines that "solidarity with the poor and leadership of the nation towards prosperity for all is a middle class responsibility, yet this responsibility is not assumed since it is incompatible with the middle class orientation towards personal economic success and consumption."[52]

Globalization is changing the very nature of religion, andto a large extent, it has undoubtedly enhanced global diffusion of Indian faiths where the NMCs are playing a significant role. [53] Globalization is also outspreading its influence on the NMCs overall culture, particularly youth culture.[54]Furthermore, the NMCs political behavior is aided by social media so that it is increasingly seen to be mobilized as a coherent group. Thiswas observed in many incidents of political revolt, but of prime importance is the large-scale demonstration

of the crucial role played in the anti-corruption campaign led by the Gandhian Anna Hazare throughout 2011 and 2012. Although this campaign drew people from all classes, it was dominated by the middle classes. This campaign not only manifested an organizational success, but it also triggered the emergence of the NMCs as a politically active force (Z. Hasan 32-33). Besides, the NMCs are becoming gradually more vocal about such political issues as transparency, corruption, infrastructure development, crime control, women's safety and freedom of speech.

As we explore global economic changes through the lens of the middle classes, we will affirm that after the various Neoliberalism policies, the NMC in India like China expanded considerably. However, "in the current neoliberal scramble for capital accumulationin which many white-collar jobs now move around the globe as freely as has long been the case for manufacturing jobs-middle-class workers are increasingly aware of the temporality of their upward mobility" [55]In-spite of promising future with capitalist and neo-liberal reforms, the NMCs and others are well aware of risks and insecurities attached with globalization.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The NMC is perceived as one of the fastest growing segment of the urban population in the city of Bangalore. The size of the NMC has significant implications as they play a vital role in India's economic growth and sustainability. Indeed, they constitute a sizeable portion of the global workforce, particularly in IT and related industries that have enhanced their identity, influence and global-local exchange.

In addition to the above, the NMC growth and their increasing consumption habits, economic mobility, substantial political attentiveness, national and international exchange and socio-cultural influence have assigned them a significant place in the Indian and global society. Hence, it is crucial to understand the NMC on the backdrop of globalization and its ongoing transformation. The government and other entitiesneed to take note of this growth narrative and these changing dynamics.

In the wake of contemporary liberalization and economic reforms, the NMC is highlighted as upwardly mobile, consumerist and well do class who live comfortable and even lavish life. Such widespread understanding about the NMC is true and certainly applies to upper tiers of the NMC. Although the pragmatic, consumerist, and self-centered identity of the NMC remains intact, their shift towards philanthropy, even though just beginning to grow, is a welcome change. Nevertheless, the question remains on how to execute this development more constructively and in theright direction. Besides, how various agencies and institutions will perceive this positive progression and utilize the potential platform for the benefit of the subalterns, needy NMC and others would be an optimistic enterprise. Holistic development of the NMC would require common vision, partnership,anda comprehensiveapproach while crossing religious and socio-cultural variances and boundaries.

In the contemporary scenario, the NMC seems to be both, an active agent and yet at times apathetic to socio-political issues and challenges. In such a situation, it will be interesting to guide them and see in what manner they progress and participate in broader socio-political discourses and developments. The NMC are capable of educating and inspiring the society about civic and democratic rights and accountability while bringing reformation to the nation at large. The results will depend on whether this NMC merely emerges as an economically upwardly mobile, consumerist, pragmatic social construction or as a self-conscious and sensitive democratic force, articulating and representing the interests of society, including the masses.

The Indian society and its several social organizations must optimistically develop more partnership, expanding its vision in a manner of networking with varieties of like-minded NGOs and organizations from the city and outside, respectfully maintaining the dynamic balance between independence and interdependence of communities. Besides, address several burning issues, especially in fields such as human rights, law and order safety and socio-cultural values, and work together for finding appropriate solutions, without neglecting key aspects of family and religiosity.

Today, the NMC in India is in a critical state of transition. The NMC family has received specific benefits through such shifts; however, it has enormously altered the traditional and functional role of women, family planning, while distressing the family dynamics and affecting children and elderly at home. Although a section of it is upwardly mobile and comfortable, others are not. Overall, the NMC face numerous issues and challenges. Strengthening the NMC family is unquestionably the need of the hour.

Moreover, when it comes to issues such as freedom of speech, individual rights, gender equality and privileges, right to education, women's equal representation in the workplace, corruption-free governance, philanthropy and much more, the NMC uphold and stand for such values. These values and attitudes need to be actively proliferated in the social fabric of society even if one's level of response may vary.

The study suggests that the NMC is poised to become the crucial segment of the urban population in India. Globalization in India will continue to appeal to theconsumerist, 'glocal' and 'upwardly mobile' NMC. Its influence on the NMCs economic, cultural and religious domains will further challenge NMCs global movements, national/state political and moral pursuit and ideals, and social dynamics. It is not surprising then that the NMC has captivated the local as well as the global imaginations of sociologists, academics, policymakers and political analysts. Globalization has initiated a wide range of developments,and its overall transforming impact on the NMC's future religiosity and cultural aspects remain to be seen. However, it is certain that religion will strive to revitalize itself through modernizing and transforming itself while reinventing its historical roots and counteracting the globalizing forces.

It seems that the religiosity of the NMC in urban India does not pose any tangible intimidation or belligerence, however, in general, nationalism linked with religion remains a concern that is becoming more complex both in natural settings and interactions and on thevirtual world. It has deepened religious sensitivity and abridged level of tolerance. The Indian society will need serious reflection on such developments, and maintain sensitivity, humility,and mutuality in their engagement with the NMC.

In general, for the NMC, religion is pushed from the center to the periphery and materialism is arriving at the center of life. Materialism has incredible influence on the NMCs, who tend to value everything from a materialistic perspective. There is a tension between the center and the periphery. How one escapes this while keeping the right equilibrium is amatter of concern for individuals, families, and society.

Consequently, with the growing middle class populace and its economic, educational and global connectedness, NMCs is embarking on political, cultural, and religious restructuring and economic progression. Globalization and the neo-liberalism policies while advancing the NMCs are increasingly shaping and influencing the Indian society. We need to understand the change dynamics which are propelling the social change in India.

Globalization in India will continue to appeal consumerist, 'glocal' and 'upwardly mobile' NMCs. Its influence on India's economy, culture, and religious domain will further challenge Indian societies/nations global movements, national/state political and moral pursuit and ideals, and social dynamics.

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