

**International Conference – 2025: Developed India @ 2047****Charting Multidisciplinary and Multi-Institutional Pathways for Inclusive Growth and Global Leadership held on 4th & 5th April, 2025****Organised by: IQAC - Gossner College, Ranchi****Urbanization: A Cultural Death among Gen Z****Namita Soren**

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Abstract

With an aspiration to have a better lifestyle, a growing number of people have been shifting from rural to urban in recent decades. People, driven by a desire for better employment and healthcare has been leaving their native land and moving into cities and expanding their family. This accelerated rapidly during the 2000s. Children born during this time witnessed technological development, globalization, cultural shift and got a taste of western society. With the increase in digital gadgets children ventured into western lifestyle to be “cool” among their generation. This in turn has largely impacted their own culture. They infer their own culture and traditions as jejune. The Generation Z (Gen Z) born between 1997 and 2012 are vulnerable to this homogenization of culture. Being digital natives, Gen Z experiences a disconnect from their ancestral heritage and are easily influenced by the global trends leaving behind their own local trends. This study explores how Urbanization has impacted the cultural identity of the Generation Z in all aspects. Through qualitative analysis, this study will examine how environment takes a larger hand in shaping Gen Z’s perception of Cultural heritage. The study also discusses the potential strategies to preserve Cultural identify in rapid Modernization.

Keynotes: *Urbanization, Generation Z, Cultural Identity, Traditions, Cultural Heritage, Modernization.*

Urbanization: A Cultural Death among Gen Z**Introduction**

As the global forces increased, it has clearly influenced the cities. Cities, being the hub of transformation, people are naturally attracted towards it. Urbanization is not just about the growth of cities, neither is it just about the shift from urban to rural, but the evolution of human potential, innovation and opportunity, where the past meets the future in the pulsation of progress. But along with the progress, there comes our culture and tradition, that which is the only proof of our identity and thereby our existence. It has gradually weakened the cultural roots of our forefathers, leading to a “Cultural Death”. Even the great philosopher of the West speaks about Change, which defines it as the only Constant.

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Earlier, to facilitate trade, cities emerged. This resulted in bringing population from different cultures who migrated and fostered change. Generation Z or the Gen Z, growing up in Urban environment seemed to be detached from traditional practices.

Generation Z

Gen Z are the people born mostly between 1997 to 2012, although the exact date is still not clear. This generation, especially in India has witnessed change and transformation in true sense. Technologically, Digitally, Socially, Culturally, and Traditionally, they have seen it all. They are truly the digital native generation and are hyper connected to the world. From letters to WhatsApp, from Photo Album to Instagram timeline, they have transformed in true sense.

Effect on Cultural Identity and Traditions

Living far away from ancestral home has affected the cultural identity and traditions of the current generation. Though it brings technological advancement, economic growth and improvement in standard of living, it challenges traditional customs. The new settlement, where people from various culture has united for betterment, now creates a culture of confusion. There is no crime in celebrating each other's culture but creating a hybridisation of it, corrupts the very essence of traditionality.

Many a time, migration leads to taking on of new lifestyles and modern habits by the parents, ultimately leads to a decline in traditional rituals, crafts, and occupations. Festivals and ceremonies too may be modified due to space and time constraints in urban settings.

Indigenous languages and dialects often seem to fadeaway as people migrate to a widely speaking urban languages. Current generations mostly prefer dominant languages to look sophisticated. For example, in a country like India where majority of population speak languages like Hindi, it gradually leads to disappearance of local dialects and in long run effecting the culture.

Urbanization also promotes nuclear families over extended families, because the elders of the family, like grandparents does not like shifting from their ancestral home, affecting the way cultural knowledge is passed down to the next generation. As working parents, they don't have time for their children to share their cultural knowledge which is normally the work of their grandparent. But as the dynamics have changed, it is difficult. As a result, Traditional joint-family values weaken on various levels as people focus now more on individualistic lifestyles rather than family members. They are detached from the idea of sharing and caring thereby diminishing the cultural norms.

With the growth of Exposure to global cultures through various media houses, commonly OTT entertainment has led to cultural assimilation, affecting the local traditions which are overshadowed by Western cultures or dominant urban cultures. In turn, Fashion, lifestyle, food, and entertainment choices often swing towards global trends, diminishing the distinctiveness of local traditions.

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As the traditional knowledge and practices are fading, there is a decline in appreciation for its heritage sites, folklores and indigenous wisdom. Consequently, this lack of consciousness affects efforts toward its conservation. Gen Z, does not look at their heritage as a responsibility rather as a post to pin on their social media timeline. They see it more as a content rather than legacy to continue. As long as the generation is not serious about the preservation of their cultural heritage, it is impossible to save them from being an endangered community.

Rise of Modernization

Urbanization has never been a simple process rather a complex one. This process is intimately related to the introduction of new modes of transportation, in particular those that allowed mobility of the masses such as the railroad. After the Second World War, the use of the automobile started a new era of mobility and landscape change. Accessibility became the most important factor in landscape change and even in the remote countryside urbanization processes can be noticed when the region is disclosed by transportation. Finally, the growing globalization of all activities and decision-making causes changes at the local level that are difficult to handle by the people living there (Antrop, 2004). With the increase in mode of transportation, it largely increased the possibilities of movement and accessibility.

The change in lifestyle has greatly affected this current generation. In order to feel included in their social group, they have indulged themselves into social media like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. For them, being digitally connected to thousands of friends is more important than being with family. Updating every little detail to their digital friends in seconds is more important than sharing it to the people they are living with. The trend of giving status on their profile has become their primary focus. They capture and store more in their rectangular screen rather than living in the moment. They drown themselves in watching and making reels. This digital space has deeply infected their brain, corrupting their moral values. An Idle Student life, the essay we all wrote about in school can hardly be seen reflecting in their routine. Staying up late at night, waking up late, skipping breakfast is the new cultural trend now. Being glued to the screen and following digital trend is their new “General Knowledge”.

Being online has connected the current generation to the world on their fingertip. Learning new language is just one click away. But this westernisation has diminished their contact with their mother-tongue, leading to their illiteracy in their own mother-tongue. The Gen Z slang of using the words and sentences in Abbreviations have diminished their competency in language too. Some of the Gen Z Abbreviations are:

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OOTD- Outfit of The Day

TBH- To Be Honest

IMO- In My Opinion

FOMO- Fear of Missing Out

IRL- In Real Life

IYKYK- If You Know You Know

Sus- Suspicious

There is no second thought in saying technological growth has greatly helped in globalisation. It has enhanced global connectivity but, is it helping?

Strategies to Preserve Cultural Identity

To Preserve the Cultural Identity, Firstly, the focus must be on Community Engagement. The more the generation is close to the community, the more they will be aware of their people and culture. Urban areas should encourage traditional and cultural events to strengthen cultural ties among urban youth.

Secondly, find a way to preserve Language. If possible, the first and foremost, a child should learn is the mother tongue. Though in this competitive world, learning the language of the environment is necessary but it is also necessary to learn the language of their own to preserve it for future generation. If not, there is no one to teach the future generation their own mother tongue.

Thirdly, Promote the Cultural Practices and Traditions more and more. Parents should not shy away from promoting their culture to their children. No opportunities should be missed in promoting their culture, to help the generation be aware of their customs. It is hard to watch, Gen Z being literate in all possible ways but struggle to represent their own culture. They feel uncomfortable talking about their own but promote western culture on social media without any hesitation.

Organising heritage events can be a best possible way through which genZ will be closer to their culture. Since they are living outside of their community, this can be very delightful experience. They would be self-aware of their identity regarding their own culture and traditions which is an absolute necessity to this generation.

Digital Preservation can be through integration of Technology and document and share traditional knowledge. Some of the Platforms like social media, Podcasts, and Online archives can be used to revive lost language, rituals and folklores. Educational Institutions must incorporate local history, traditions and indigenous languages into curricula to ensure younger generations stay connected to their roots.

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Urbanization, if examined closely is a double-edged sword for cultural identity and traditions. Though it threatens to erase some aspects of heritage, it also provides a space for cultural adaptation and evolution. The challenge nevertheless lies in finding a balance, that is, preserving one's cultural roots while cherishing the benefits of urbanization. To look on the brighter side, urbanization has also led to cultural blending. It is the space where diverse groups communicate, interact and create a new hybrid cultural expression.

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