

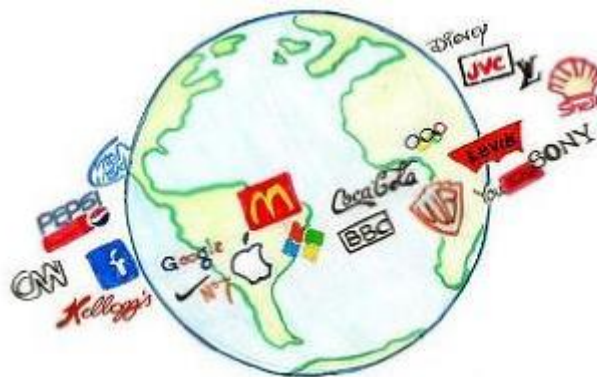
# Westernization

## Definition:

**Westernization**, the adoption of the practices and culture of western Europe by societies and countries in other parts of the world, whether through compulsion or influence. Westernization reached much of the world as part of the process of colonialism and continues to be a significant cultural phenomenon as a result of globalization.

Westernization began with traders, colonizers, and missionaries from western Europe who believed that their way of life was superior to those of the peoples in the countries to which they traveled. The occupied peoples were required or encouraged to adopt western European business practices, languages, alphabets, and attire. They were also encouraged to assume western European education systems, literary and artistic standards, and to convert to Christianity. Many countries had Western types of government and military practices imposed on them.

In the 20th century the United States, itself the result of western European colonization of North America, arguably became the most significant exporter of Western culture. Its movies, popular music, and popular fashion were taken up not only in Asia, Africa, and Central and South America but even in western Europe itself. Technology acted as both a form of and a transmitter of Westernization. Some leaders, including Kemal Atatürk of Turkey and Reza Shah Pahlavi of Iran, embraced Westernization, but the tendency of Westernization to obliterate languages and cultural forms of other peoples also aroused widespread opposition.



The adaptation or influence of western (European) culture among societies across the globe in areas such as life-style priorities, education, values, economics, architecture, clothing, politics, entertainment, etc

A set of reforms which were launched by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder and first president of the Turkish republic, in areas like law, clothing, alphabet, industry etc

Social process whereby a given nation or society systematically comes under or adopts/absorbs Western cultural values at multiple levels of its life.

A process through which societies are influenced or adopt Western cultures in specific areas (lifestyle, clothing, values, language)

Social process whereby a given nation or society systematically comes under or adopts/absorbs Western cultural values at multiple levels of its life.

According to M.N. Srinivas, “Westernisation” refers to “the changes brought about in the Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule and the term subsumes changes occurring at different levels – technology, institutions, ideology and values.”

## **The effect of westernization on our cultures**

Westernization has been a pervasive and accelerating influence across the world in the last few centuries, with some thinkers assuming westernization to be the equivalent of modernization. It has been a serious threat and is establishing a strong base in many people slowly wiping out their culture. Westernization has greatly affected our traditions, customs, family, and our love and respect for others. According to today people find it "cool" to follow the western culture. People find eating with their hands now wrong just because of their friends that have come from a completely different background. No! this should not be the way. We should be proud of who we are and preserve our cultures. If you don't follow your culture then who will? If you can't take care of this rich, unique identity that you have... your status will drop and you will have nothing to guide in your life. How boring is it, for everyone in this world to have the same lifestyle, food, clothing etc. We have cultures that make us our life and we must make use of it in the right way. People are blindly following the western culture without knowing its consequences.

In many cases today, children try to avoid their parents for foolish reasons that we shouldn't care about such as their accent or the way they dress. We must learn to be ourselves. It is good to come modernized but it also has a limit. There's no harm in taking goods from the west, but this does not mean that we should completely adopt it and pretend to be western and misrepresent our identity. The western culture is trying to

snatch the rich cultural heritage that we have within us. It is very unfortunate today, that the new generation does not have any knowledge about their culture which is not their fault, but the fault of the parents who did not teach them and enlighten them about the importance and true colour of their culture. It is not only important for us to follow our cultures but to also understand it and make use of it wisely. Today cultures have been subjugated and dominated by the west. Our cultural practices have paved way for foreign way of doing things. Can you believe that in most schools today, speaking another language apart from language leads to a punishment!

In addition, language plays the most important role in providing each community with an identity. There is a general agreement that if language is lost, it harms the cultural diversity of the wider society. Although there are also positives too of the influence of westernization on culture however, we are only looking at the negatives as that is what people should be concerned about.

#### Some of the real life situations:

Community the Bohras used to eat together with our family using a thaal (large stainless steel plate) and eat using our hands. However, today the western world has made us shy to eat with our hands and using a thaal. Therefore today we use fork and knives to eat and use plates and bowls on a table.

Before we used to wear traditional clothes like Sherwani for the men and Shalwar Kameez for the women during functions but today as people are getting more modern and as they have got ashamed of their clothes and find it downgraded, we ignore our cultures and wear suits and dresses for the women.

People used to speak their languages freely and openly but today the western culture has taken so much priority that people feel shy to speak their mother tongue and always speak English.

#### **Some of the outcomes of following the western culture (negative effects)**

1. Children don't respect their elders, parents.
2. Family has become nuclear and one has lost in touch with their relatives .
3. Becoming artificial person by following artificial lifestyle.
4. Becoming less interested to know about one's traditions and customs.
5. Parents are considered burden on children. Parents fulfill their responsibility and children when they grow up, consider them a burden.
6. Discos have become lifestyle.

7. Drinking and pub culture has become lifestyle.
8. Late night parties.
9. No concerned feelings towards close relatives etc
10. Loss of morality.
11. Loss of affection and attachment to the family.
12. People become to proud.

To conclude with, Westernization has mostly affected our lifestyles and characteristics and soon everything including our values and beliefs if we don't take action. We are not trying to say, that the western culture is bad, but we are saying that we must stick with our cultures, no matter what happens as it is said that **"Culture is the process by which a person becomes all that they were created capable of being."** so if you don't want to ruin yourself, preserve and stay with your culture!

## **Understanding Modernization and Westernization**

Shall I be called modern if I am comfortable wearing a simple kameez-salwar? Shall I not be called modern if I walk through streets wearing a jeans or a trendy dress? Usually a person wearing stylish and branded clothes is considered to be 'Modern'. But is it really modern? No, it is not modern; it is being western. People usually misinterpret 'Modernization' with 'Westernization', which in reality are different. It is important for all of us to know that these two terms are not to be confused and mixed with each other.

In simple terms, Westernization is a process of imitation of western countries by non-western countries, whereby societies come under or adopt the western culture. In short, Westernization is about the adoption of "Western" values. On the other hand, Modernization has a wider connotation. In fact, Westernization is a sub-process of Modernization. Accepting or adopting the modern style or modern ways and ideas of thinking, living, etc is 'Modernization'. In other words, Modernization is a change or modification which offers the promise of the preservation of the past. Westernization is not important but we need to modernize so that we are able to compete and can keep pace with the fast moving world of the present 21st century.

The difference between Modernization and Westernization can be better understood by the following example. Once at a party, a lady entered the hall wearing trendy outfits. On seeing her, a girl of my age sitting next to me said, "Wow! See how modern she is." On hearing the word 'Modern', I asked her, "In what sense do you find her modern?" She replied, "Obviously her dressing, her looks." Then I posed her another question, "Do you think that modernity lies in one's way of dress up?" She replied, "Of course dressing makes you modern but unfortunately I belong to a family where people are not modern and wear simple salwar suit and luckily my

would-be-in-laws are quite modern as they dress up in western outfits.” I was perplexed to hear her statement and wondered how one can judge the modernity of a person in the way they dress. But to me, modernity lies in one’s thinking. What people call Modernization is actually Westernization. Westernization is nothing but the modern form of Imperialism and the outcome of Globalization. The West manipulates us in such a way that we tend to forget our own culture, our tradition and blindly follow theirs’. The irony is that we don’t even realize what is happening to us and the height is that people go to the extent of ending their relationships. A few days ago, I came to know about a recently engaged couple where the boy considered himself to be ‘Modern’ because of his branded clothes, shoes, perfumes and what not. He would tease his fiancée who was a simple living girl with a different thinking. After few months of their relationship, the boy broke the engagement because the girl couldn’t match with his thinking, his lifestyle, etc. One must understand that we cannot pose ourselves to be modern just by wearing modern outfits but we should be in a position to appreciate the lifestyles of people belonging to different regions instead of making fun of them. I believe that modernity of a person is in no way related to his/her way of dressing up.

It should be remembered that one cannot modernize oneself without a degree of educational reform. In ancient India, before the British Raj, we had Sati system-where a woman was compelled to burn herself with the body of her dead husband. But after the introduction of education system, people were enlightened and raised their voices against this inhuman practice, till it got finally abolished. Moreover, condition of widows was no better than animals. But, in the modern times, men and women are considered equal. This transition from the India where women were treated like animals to the contemporary India where they walk shoulder to shoulder with men is the outcome of Modernization.

Modernization involves changes not only at the institutional level but also a fundamental change at the personal level. It involves a change in modes of thinking, beliefs, opinions, attitudes, actions and also a change in the social structure from a closed conservative society to a classless, casteless society in which the individual’s status depends not on his birth but on his personal achievements.