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Cultural Hegemony: Colonial Obligation, Swadeshi Resistance and Globalization in India from the British to the Contemporary Era

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Abstract

The concept of 'Cultural Hegemony' by philosopher Antonio Gramsci is crucial to comprehending Western Colonial effect on India's liberation struggle. British colonisation changed Indian society, morals and knowledge beyond its political and economic goals. The Crown aimed to control Indian social, cultural, political and economic perspectives through education, language, and Western philosophies. English education and Bengali "Babu culture" are tangible results of this process. However, some Indian leaders and thinkers blended Western ideals with Indian Culture to fight colonial power. The 'Swadeshi' movement promoted self-reliance, especially in textiles and resisted British cultural dominance. Globalisation in India in the 1990s affected India's cultural identity with luxury Western brands and lifestyle, reinforcing new cultural hegemony. This study examines cultural hegemony in India from colonial control to post-independence and modern times, examining how resistance, adaptation and globalisation have shaped the Indian situation.

Keywords: Hegemony, Babu Culture, Globalisation, Hollywood, FOMO, Premium Brands

The concept of cultural hegemony refers to the domination of a culturally diverse society by the ruling class, whose worldview becomes the accepted cultural norm without any notable coercion. Developed by Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci, Cultural Hegemony is particularly applicable in the context of Western dominance during the Indian freedom struggle. Colonial rule in India under the British Empire was not just an economic or political endeavour but also a cultural one. Western ideologies, values and systems of knowledge were imposed upon India, contributing to a cultural hegemony that played a pivotal role in shaping the colonial experience and India's eventual struggle for Independence. A significant tool of British cultural hegemony in India was the introduction of Western education. The English Education Act of 1835 and the establishment of institutions like the universities in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta were designed to create an educated class that would serve as intermediaries between the British rulers and the Indian masses. Thomas Babington Macaulay's famous "Minute on Indian Education" in 1835 argued for the replacement of traditional Indian education with Western knowledge, particularly English Literature and Science, claiming that a single shelf of a European library was worth more than the entire body of indigenous Indian literature (Macaulay, 1835).

Research methodology adopted for the study is Discourse Analysis, with investigating the role of language, education, and cultural practices in shaping cultural hegemony as the purpose of study. Method

includes analysis of textual content to identify recurring themes and narratives that reinforced or resisted cultural hegemony.

The introduction of Western education had a dual effect; while it exposed Indians to enlightenment ideals of liberty, democracy and nationalism, it also alienated many from their native cultural roots and damaged the Indian Knowledge System. Educated Indians found themselves caught between two worlds: their traditional heritage and the modern Western thought they had been taught to value. This cultural flux created a class of Indians who were culturally subservient to Western ideals, which was a chalked-out outcome of British colonial policy (Chatterjee, 1993). However, in the process, English gradually also became the language of resistance. The Western-educated elite, while initially influenced by colonial ideologies, began to use these very ideas to critique colonialism. Prominent leaders were well-versed in English and Western political thought. They used this knowledge to craft anti-colonial arguments and rally support for Indian Independence (Sarkar, 2002). While British colonisers propagated their ideas of civilization, rationality and progress, Indian leaders were not passive recipients of these ideologies. Icons like Mahatma Gandhi rejected the unabated adoption of Western values and instead promoted the revival of Indian cultural practices and Indian Knowledge System. Gandhi ji's ideas of "Swaraj" (self-rule) and "Swadeshi" (self-reliance) were in direct opposition to the British-imposed economic and cultural systems. He encouraged Indians to boycott British goods and promote indigenous industries, particularly hand-spun textiles, to break free from economic dependence on the West (Parekh, 1989). Indian intellectuals and leaders reinterpreted Western political philosophies to suit the Indian context. The ideas of liberalism and democracy, imported from the West, were reshaped to blend with India's unique cultural and social landscape. This selective appropriation of Western ideas allowed Indian leaders to build a nationalist movement that was not only anti-colonial but also culturally rooted in Indian traditions (Chatterjee, 1993). The Bengal Renaissance, a cultural movement in the 19th century, also contributed to a resurgence of Indian cultural identity. It sought to revive and modernize aspects of Indian literature, art and philosophy while simultaneously engaging with Western ideas. Leaders like Rabindranath Tagore used Western literary forms while maintaining a deeply Indian sensibility in their works, providing a counter-narrative to the cultural dominance and hegemony of the West (Sarkar, 2002). Thus, the Indian cultural scape was more or less able to identify and neutralise the hegemony imposed by the Colonial West by abjuring overtly or covertly the tools of hegemony tried by the Colonial Masters, with a few exceptions.

The ‘Babu culture’ of Kolkata in the 19th and wee 20th centuries emerged as a critical element in shaping the socio-cultural landscape of colonial Bengal. Often associated with English-educated, Westernized Bengali elites, the Babus were a product of British colonial policies, which aimed to create a class of intermediaries to assist in colonial administration. However, the evolution of the Babu culture went beyond administrative roles, contributing to the cultural hegemony of the colonial West in pre-independent India. The Babu culture originated in the socio-political climate of British-ruled Bengal, particularly Kolkata, which was initially the centre of British power in India. The British colonial administration aimed to cultivate a class of English-educated Indians who could mediate between the British rulers and the Indian populace (Chatterjee, 1993). This resulted in creation of a class of Bengali elites who were fluent in English, educated in Western institutions and familiar with European customs. These individuals, referred to as Babus, embodied a hybrid identity that blended traditional Indian values with Western ideologies. The term Babu, originally a title of respect in Bengal, gradually took on a judgemental meaning as it became associated with a class of effeminate, Anglicized men who were more concerned with mimicry of

Western habits than with nationalist or cultural integrity (Mukherjee, 2009). The Babus were seen as apolitical and passive, aligning more with colonial interests than with the aspirations of the Indian masses. Antonio Gramsci's theory of 'Cultural Hegemony' provides a useful framework for understanding how the Babu culture contributed to the reinforcement of British colonial power and western hegemony in the Indian society. The British colonialists, through the establishment of English-language education and the promotion of Western culture, were able to construct a cultural hegemony that positioned Western norms as superior. The Babu culture had a profound impact on the social and intellectual spheres of Calcutta (now Kolkata). English education, particularly through institutions like Hindu College (later Presidency College and now Presidency University), became a gateway to social mobility for many Bengali families. As a result, Western intellectual traditions, especially liberalism, individualism and rationalism, became entrenched in the minds of the English-educated Bengali elite. These values, although apparently progressive, were deployed in an engineered way that served the colonial agenda by undermining traditional Indian cultural and religious practices (Chakrabarty, 2000).

Babus were often seen as cultural brokers, mediating between the British colonizers and the colonized Indians. However, their intellectual pursuits and cultural practices were largely confined to imitating Western norms, which left little room for the assertion of an authentic Indian identity. The Babu's embrace of British literature, philosophy and art led to the marginalization of indigenous knowledge systems, contributing to the erosion of native cultural heritage. The marked rise of English newspapers and journals in Kolkata reflected the growing influence of Western thought. While some Babus did engage in critical debates about colonialism, many of their writings were more concerned with emulating Western literary and philosophical forms than with critiquing colonial power structures (Banerjee, 2011). This selective assimilation of Western culture thus served to legitimize British authority by reinforcing the notion that colonial rule was necessary for India's intellectual and moral reforms.

The representation of the Babu in colonial discourse also played a role in reinforcing British cultural hegemony. The stereotypical image of the Babu as effeminate, weak and morally degenerated aligned with colonial narratives that depicted Indians as unfit for self-governance (Sarkar, 1985). British officials often portrayed the Babus as overly Westernized, frivolous and disconnected from the realities of Indian life, culture and identity. This stereotype served to justify British rule by suggesting that Indians, particularly the Western-educated elite, were incapable of leading a nationalist movement and governing themselves effectively. Despite its role in promoting British cultural hegemony, the Babu culture was not entirely monolithic. Some members of the Babu class used their Western education and exposure to British political thought to articulate critiques of colonialism. Figures such as Raja Rammohan Roy represented strands of the Babu culture that sought to reconcile Western rationalism with Indian spirituality and nationalism (Kopf, 1969). Their efforts laid the groundwork for the Indian renaissance and the emergence of a nationalist movement that challenged British rule. However, these voices of dissent were exceptions. For the most part, the Babu culture remained aligned with the interests of the colonial state, inadvertently sustaining the cultural hegemony of the West. The ambivalence of the Babu class, torn between admiration for Western modernity and a desire for Indian self-rule, reflects the complex and contradictory nature of colonial subjectivity.

British colonization not only involved political and economic control but also sought to impose Western culture and lifestyle on Indian society. One of the most apparent aspects of this imposition was through foreign textiles and clothing, which symbolized Western superiority and the inferiority of indigenous practices. The influx of British-made clothes undermined India's traditional textile industries and gradually

became a sign of modernity and social status among the Indian elite. However, the rise of the Swadeshi movement in the late 19th century was a direct challenge to this cultural domination. Swadeshi advocated for the boycott of foreign goods, the revival of local industries and the reassertion of Indian identity through indigenous textiles like the 'Khadi'. The movement was not only a form of economic self-sufficiency but also a powerful expression of resistance to the colonial cultural imperialism. This cultural imposition, however, did not go unchallenged. The Swadeshi movement, emerging in the wake of Bengal's partition in 1905, was a significant nationalist response to British cultural domination. Advocating for the boycott of foreign goods and the revival of indigenous industries, Swadeshi was a movement that reasserted Indian identity through self-reliance, particularly in the sphere of textiles.

In British India, the British government, along with European manufacturers, flooded the Indian market with machine-made textiles and garments procured from England. Indian elites, flowing metamorphosing through Sanskritization and seeking to align themselves with the power and prestige of the British, adopted these clothes as a sign of their modernity and social standing. This process created a visible contrast between Western attire, which symbolized progress and sophistication and Indian clothing, which was increasingly regarded as backward or traditional. British colonial policies further aggravated India's indigenous textile industry, which had been one of the world's leading producers of quality textiles before colonial rule, saw its handwoven textiles industries, such as muslin and khadi, shattered under British economic policies. The imposition of British taxes on Indian textiles, coupled with the unrestricted import of British machine-made fabrics, ensured the dominance of foreign brands in Indian markets. Thus, clothing in British India became a clear marker of the cultural superiority that the British sought to impose on Indian society.

The Swadeshi movement, which began in 1905 as a response to the partition of Bengal, was a critical moment in Indian resistance to British cultural and economic domination. The movement sought to promote economic self-reliance by encouraging Indians to boycott British goods and to use Indian-made products, particularly textiles. Swadeshi was not only an economic protest but also a cultural and political assertion of Indian identity. Central to the Swadeshi movement was the revival of khadi, hand-spun and hand-woven cloth, as a symbol of national pride and resistance to British imperialism. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, 'Khadi' became a prominent symbol of Indian self-reliance and a rejection of foreign domination. Gandhi's advocacy of wearing Khadi was not merely a call to boycott British goods but an attempt to empower Indian artisans and promote a decentralized, rural economy. Wearing khadi became a political act, a visible expression of resistance to British cultural hegemony and an identity to reflect belongingness to the motherland.

Swadeshi also challenged the cultural narrative that equated Western-style clothing with progress and modernity. By embracing indigenous textiles, Swadeshi activists reasserted the value and dignity of Indian culture, countering the colonial ideology that sought to devalue Indian ways of life. The movement ultimately laid the groundwork for the larger national struggle for independence, as it impregnated a sense of national consciousness and collective identity rooted in indigenous practices and culture. Thus, foreign clothes became a definite tool of imposing cultural hegemony in British India and Indian resistance through Swadeshi reasserted identity of the motherland, sovereignty and independence.

Almost four decades after Independence, the 1990s marked a significant turning point in India's economic history. Faced with a severe 'balance of payments' crisis, the Government of India adopted liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG) reforms, which opened the Indian economy to foreign investments,

trade and global market influences. One notable consequence of this economic restructuring was the influx of foreign luxury brands, which significantly impacted Indian consumer behaviour and cultural norms.

In 1991, India shifted from a socialist-inspired economic model to a market-oriented approach, largely driven by the need to address a burgeoning economic crisis (Nayar, 2001). The government reduced restrictions on foreign direct investment (FDI), eased import tariffs and allowed greater participation of multinational corporations (MNCs) in the Indian economy (Ahluwalia, 2002). This marked the advent of globalization in India, resulting in a steady flow of foreign goods and services, including luxury products. Prior to the 1990s, India had limited exposure to international brands due to stringent protectionist policies that emphasized self-reliance. With the liberalization of the economy, India saw a surge in the entry of foreign luxury brands such as Gucci, Louis Vuitton and Mercedes-Benz. The presence of these brands not only catered to India's growing affluent middle and upper classes but also introduced a new set of consumer aspirations and lifestyles.

Luxury brands, especially those associated with fashion, automobiles and technology, often symbolize status, exclusivity and modernity. The arrival of these brands in India served as markers of wealth and global sophistication and through their marketing strategies, they cultivated a sense of aspirational consumerism that aligned with Western ideals of success and prestige. The cultural significance of luxury brands lies in their association with a cosmopolitan lifestyle, which became increasingly desirable in post-globalized India. By adopting foreign luxury products, Indian consumers, especially the elite and upper-middle-class segments, sought to align themselves with global trends, thereby signifying their participation in a globalized economy. This phenomenon reflects Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital," where the consumption of luxury items serves as a means to distinguish oneself in terms of social status and taste (Bourdieu, 1984). Through advertising and media representations, these luxury brands have propagated Western notions of beauty, success and material wealth, thereby marginalizing indigenous cultural practices and promoting homogenization (Chopra, 2003). The increasing prominence of luxury brands in urban India has, to some extent, displaced local products and traditional crafts, leading to a shift in consumer preferences toward foreign goods that carry the allure of international prestige (Sinha & Krishnan, 2011).

The consistent rise of shopping malls and luxury boutiques in major metropolitan cities exemplifies how Western consumer culture has permeated Indian society. These spaces serve not just as retail outlets but as symbols of modernity and affluence, reinforcing the cultural hegemony of global capitalism (Prasad, 2015). The promotion of luxury brands in these settings normalizes the idea that Western lifestyles are aspirational, thereby subtly perpetuating the notion that Indian culture and products are inferior or outdated.

The percolation of global luxury brands into Indian markets has had far-reaching social implications. One significant effect is the reshaping of identity, particularly among India's urban youth and affluent classes. With increased access to international brands and trends, many young Indians have adopted Western consumption patterns, blurring the lines between local and global identities (Banerjee, 2008). While this shift reflects India's integration into the global economy, it has also led to a growing tension between traditional Indian values and the global consumer culture proliferated by these brands. Also, the growing preference for luxury brands has reinforced socio-economic divisions in India, as these products are often out of bounds for vast majority of the population. Thus, the cultural hegemony of global brands not only alters cultural norms but also widens existing social inequalities.

In recent years, foreign clothing brands and premium labels have gained significant popularity in the country. As global fashion markets converge, India has witnessed the infiltration of international brands such as Zara, H&M, Gucci and Louis Vuitton, to name a few, which have come to signify social status and modernity. This shift not only affects fashion but also plays a role in shaping cultural norms and identities. The adoption of these brands reflects a broader cultural transformation influenced by Western ideals and consumerism, marking a distinct form of cultural hegemony in contemporary India.

Traditional Indian attire such as sarees, salwar kameez and dhotis have long been symbols of cultural identity. However, with the rise of international fashion brands, there is a growing preference for Western styles, especially among urban populations. This shift represents more than a change in clothing; it is indicative of a broader transformation in cultural identity. Foreign brands, particularly those marketed as "premium" or "luxury," symbolize modernity, sophistication and cosmopolitanism (Nijman, 2012).

The increasing desire for foreign and luxury brands is not equally distributed across all socio-economic classes. While the urban middle class may aspire to own Zara or H&M, the elite class prefers high-end luxury labels like Louis Vuitton, Prada, or Gucci. The consumption of these premium brands creates and sustains class distinctions within Indian society. As Bourdieu (1984) suggested, taste in fashion and clothing is often a marker of social class and a way to maintain distinctions between the elite and the rest of society.

Foreign clothing and premium brands in India not only signify social status but also promote Western ideals of individualism, freedom and self-expression. This contrasts with the traditional Indian emphasis on collectivism and community-oriented values. The growing popularity of foreign brands reflects the wider acceptance of Western norms, as global capitalism emphasizes consumption as a path to self-fulfilment. Premium brands are marketed as symbols of success, sophistication and modernity, thereby raising a consumerist culture where social worth is tied to material possessions (Sen & Roy, 2018).

This shift in cultural values, influenced by Western consumerism, has led to a cultural transformation, particularly among India's urban youth. As they increasingly engage with global media, travel and fashion trends, their clothing choices reflect a hybrid identity—rooted in Indian tradition but aspirational towards Western modernity (Mukherjee, 2019).

Hollywood, as the global epicentre of entertainment, wields immense influence not only through its films but also through the socio-cultural and politico-economic values it transmits across borders. In the context of India, the consumption of Hollywood films has risen gradually in the past couple of decades, driven by the liberalization of the Indian economy and the growing accessibility of Western media. Consequently, Hollywood has played a key role in shaping cultural norms and promoting Western consumerism in India, often through the marketing of premium and luxury brands.

The rise of multiplexes, increased availability of international streaming platforms and changing audience preferences have contributed to Hollywood's growing presence in India. Young Indian consumers are more receptive to Western cultural symbols and consumerism as portrayed in Hollywood productions (Ray, 2014). Films such as The Great Gatsby (2013) and Crazy Rich Asians (2018) exemplify how the portrayal of luxury lifestyles in Hollywood has contributed to shaping the aspirations of Indian audiences, who increasingly associate Western luxury brands with social mobility, success and trendy. Product placement, a common marketing tactic in films, subtly promotes high-end brands by associating them with successful characters and desirable lifestyles. Studies have shown that product placement in films can significantly impact brand awareness and consumer purchase intent (Russell & Belch, 2005). In India, where the luxury market has expanded significantly, Hollywood films have facilitated the introduction and promotion of

luxury Western brands like Apple, Gucci, Hermès, Louis Vuitton, Rolex, etc., promoting an aspirational consumer culture (Kumar & Bhattacharya, 2020).

For example, in the film The Devil Wears Prada (2006), brands like Chanel and Prada are prominently featured, influencing audiences' perception of these brands as status symbols. The film's glamorous depiction of the fashion industry and luxury products aligns with the cultural narrative that wealth and consumption are indicative of success. This is particularly relevant in India's rapidly expanding upper-middle class, which seeks to distinguish itself through conspicuous consumption of Western luxury products (Chadha & Husband, 2006).

Furthermore, the portrayal of success in Hollywood films is frequently tied to ownership of luxury goods, thus promoting the idea that upward social mobility is synonymous with material wealth. By consuming Western luxury brands, Indian audiences symbolically align themselves with the global elite, reinforcing a hegemonic global culture that prioritizes Western values over local traditions (Ray, 2014). Additionally, Indian films are increasingly portraying Westernized characters and settings, mirroring the aspirational narratives seen in Hollywood. This transformation highlights how cultural hegemony operates not only through direct consumption of Western media but also through the adaptation of Western ideals within local cultural productions.

Fear of missing out (FOMO) is a psychological phenomenon where individuals experience anxiety over the possibility of missing out on rewarding experiences or opportunities. This feeling can drive people to make purchases, engage in activities, or attend events to stay connected and relevant (Przybylski et. al., 2013). In the context of hegemony, especially through luxury brands, FOMO plays a significant role in influencing consumer behaviour, particularly in markets like India where a rising affluent class seeks to establish its identity through exclusive and premium products. With an increase in disposable income, urbanization and a growing middle class aspiring for upward mobility or mimicry, there has been a noticeable surge in the consumption of premium luxury products (Bain & Company, 2021). As a result, luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Hermès have expanded their presence in India, recognizing the market's potential. These brands have capitalized on the Indian consumer's desire for exclusivity and status, utilizing FOMO to further drive demand. Indian consumers often seek luxury brands to signal their success and elevate their standing in society. Missing out on these products could equate to losing face or social status.

Luxury brands in India employ a variety of strategies to harness FOMO. Limited-edition products, exclusive collaborations and private sales events are commonly used to create a sense of urgency among consumers. These strategies generate a heightened perception of scarcity, triggering the fear of missing an opportunity to own something rare and coveted (Heine, 2012).

For instance, Hermès, renowned for its handcrafted bags, limits the number of certain products in the market, often creating abnormally long waiting lists. This strategy taps directly into FOMO, as consumers are willing to wait months or even years to secure these items, driven by the fear that they might miss their chance entirely (Hennigs et al., 2015). Such practices create a perception that owning the product confers a sense of belonging to a prestigious, select group. In recent years, social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook have played a significant role in intensifying FOMO among Indian luxury consumers. Influencers and celebrities showcasing their luxury lifestyles on these platforms further fuel FOMO, as followers are exposed to aspirational content that they desire to emulate (Kumar & Nayak, 2019).

The cultural context in India plays a significant role in shaping FOMO as it relates to luxury consumption. India is a collectivist society, where social status and community recognition are pivotal (Hofstede, 1980). In this context, owning luxury goods is not just a matter of personal satisfaction but also a means of enhancing one's standing within a community. Consequently, the fear of not being seen as successful or prosperous can drive individuals toward luxury consumption. The societal pressure to fit into affluent circles and not miss out on trends is amplified in cities like Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore, where exposure to luxury lifestyles is prevalent.

India has historically been a part of global supply chains while striving to maintain its sovereignty in various economic, political and social realms. In recent years, two significant policy initiatives: 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (meaning Self-Reliant India) and 'Make in India', have come to the forefront of India's development discourse. These initiatives aim to promote self-reliance, reduce dependence on foreign imports and boost domestic manufacturing. By doing so, India seeks to counter the economic hegemony imposed by global powers, which often control critical supply chains and resources.

Introduced in May 2020, the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative was positioned as a strategy to strengthen India's economic resilience in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Mukherjee, 2021). At its core, 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' envisions an India capable of producing goods and services within its sovereign, minimizing its reliance on imports, especially in key areas such as defence, medicine, electronics and renewable energy and ensuring that domestic industries flourish. The policy outlines five pillars—economy, infrastructure, system, vibrant demography and demand, that guide the country's self-reliance journey (Government of India, 2020).

Launched in 2014, the 'Make in India' initiative was designed to position India as a global manufacturing hub (Singh, 2020). The programme encourages foreign and domestic companies to manufacture goods in India by providing attractive incentives, including tax benefits, streamlined regulatory processes and improved infrastructure. By boosting domestic production, 'Make in India' aims to increase India's share in global manufacturing, thereby reducing the country's trade deficits and dependence on imports. It focuses on reducing India's economic vulnerability to international markets and hegemonic pressures, which often result from over-reliance on imports or foreign investments.

Global economic hegemony is characterized by the control exerted by dominant powers, particularly in terms of trade policies, production capabilities and financial systems. The world's major powers like the United States, European Union, China, have traditionally leveraged their technological and industrial supremacy to influence global markets. For instance, China's dominance in manufacturing and control over rare earth metals has given it significant sway over global supply chains (Yellinek & Smyth, 2022). This imbalance often leaves smaller or developing nations vulnerable to external pressures, coercive trade practices and supply chain disruptions.

The 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Make in India' initiatives are India's strategic response to economic hegemony. By promoting local manufacturing and reducing dependence on foreign technologies, India is positioning itself as a self-sufficient economy, which is not merely about boosting Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but also about achieving sovereignty over the resources and technologies that drive the economy. India's emphasis on self-reliance is particularly evident in sectors such as defence, where foreign over-dependence had previously been a subject of major concern. In 2020, the Government of India introduced measures to boost domestic defence manufacturing, including a censor on the import of certain weapons and equipment (Bhat, 2021). These reforms not only enhance India's defence capabilities but also reduce the country's vulnerability to geopolitical shifts or sanctions from major powers.

Similarly, the pharmaceutical sector, which became a focal point during the COVID-19 pandemic, underscores India's potential for self-sufficiency. India is already a global leader in generic drug production and the government's initiatives further encourage local companies to innovate and manufacture critical healthcare products within the sovereign (Mukherjee, 2021).

The cultural hegemony of the West during India's freedom struggle reveals a complex interplay of domination, resistance and adaptation. British colonial policies not only sought political and economic control but also aimed to impose Western culture and ideologies upon the Indian society. This was evident in the introduction of English education, which created a class of Western-educated Indian elites called the "Babus", who were expected to serve as intermediaries between the British rulers and the Indian masses. The Babu culture, particularly in Kolkata, represented a peculiar blend of traditional Indian values and Western ideologies, reinforcing colonial authority. Yet, this cultural assimilation also gave rise to intellectual debates and forms of resistance. Leaders like Raja Rammohan Roy, while influenced by Western ideas, laid the groundwork for a nationalist movement that sought to blend Indian traditions with modernity. A key moment of resistance to British cultural hegemony came through the Swadeshi movement, which not only challenged British economic control but also sought to reclaim Indian cultural identity by promoting indigenous textiles, particularly 'khadi'. Under Gandhi's strong and clear leadership, Swadeshi became a powerful symbol of Indian resistance to Western cultural dominance and hegemony. By advocating for self-reliance and the boycott of foreign goods, the movement reasserted the value of Indian traditions and assimilated a collective sense of national pride.

However, the narrative of colonial cultural hegemony did not end with Independence. The 1990s marked a new chapter in India's cultural evolution and hegemony with the privatization and liberalization of the economy and the influx of foreign luxury brands. Globalization introduced new forms of Western cultural dominance, particularly through consumerism. Luxury brands like Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Mercedes-Benz, etc. became symbols of status, prestige, identity and modernity, reshaping Indian consumer behaviour and cultural values. This period also witnessed the rise of Hollywood's influence in India, with Western films promoting aspirational lifestyles centred around show-off, luxury and wealth. The consumption of foreign luxury goods in India reflects the ongoing cultural transformation driven by globalization. As Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital" suggests, the adoption of these luxury brands serves to distinguish social classes and perpetuates a form of cultural hegemony rooted in Western ideals. The desire to align with global trends and Western consumerism has reshaped cultural identities, particularly among India's urban populace. This shift in cultural values often comes at the expense of traditional Indian practices, creating a drift between modernity and heritage.

Despite the pervasive influence of Western cultural hegemony, there have been efforts to resist and preserve India's rich cultural heritage. State initiatives like 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Make in India' reflect the country's desire to regain economic and cultural sovereignty in the face of global hegemonic strategies. By promoting domestic manufacturing and reducing dependence on foreign imports, these policies aim to strengthen India's self-reliance and protect its industries from the dominance of global powers.

In conclusion, the cultural hegemony of the West, from the colonial period to the present day, has significantly shaped Indian society. While British colonialism sought to impose Western values and practices, Indian leaders, intellectuals and movements reinterpreted these influences to build a nationalist identity rooted in indigenous traditions. The advent of globalization introduced new forms of cultural dominance, particularly through consumerism and luxury brands, further complicating India's cultural

landscape. As India continues to navigate in the globalized world, the challenge lies in balancing the allure of Western modernity with the preservation of its indigenous cultural diversity and heritage. The People must employ logic and develop the wisdom to take decisions and choices regarding what suits and serves best to their interests, rather than falling in the alluring traps and get hegemonized.

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