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## ***SOCIAL TRENDS***

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ENLIGHTENMENT TO PERFECTION

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## **Culture Shock at Universities: Suburban Students and their Experience of Marginality**

Arunima Bhowmick

*Marginality is a condition of disadvantaged individuals and communities that arises due to unfavourable environmental, cultural, social, political and economic factors. The vulnerable situation that they confront can be either societal or spatial, very often, both. This paper seeks to understand predicaments and vulnerabilities of students coming to universities in metropolitan Kolkata from the margins of the city, more often referred to as the "suburbs".*

*The study is an attempt to relook marginality in the face of globalisation and dissect the context of regionalism in this light. The study has gathered strength from case studies of students coming to universities from these regions and an account of their conditions and sense of discrimination has been recorded. Their sense of marginality finds manifestation in difference of language, more precisely their speech and diction, fashion and most importantly lifestyle. Tracing the origin of the concept of marginality back to the one who coined it, Robert Ezra Park (1928), young students were found placed between multiple cultures and their negotiations give rise to a "hybrid" personality or the marginal man. Students from suburbs might not necessarily have pronounced class differences with the local residential students, but their possession of "cultural capital" and further access to it in the universities often become a ripe condition for furthering marginalization. Finally, the paper engages in addressing the vital question – whether to uphold "affirmative action" and support the marginal status, or create a collective of poorly privileged?*

**Keywords:** marginality, suburbs, cultural capital, culture shock, affirmative action, hybrid personality.