

Impact of Globalization on the Society and Culture of the Northeast India

Debjani Goswami

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Hojai Girls' College, Assam, India

DOI: [10.55559/sjahss.v2i12.175](https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v2i12.175)

Received: 15.10.2023 | Accepted: 07-12-2023 | Published: 13.12.2023

Electronic reference (Cite this article):

Goswami, D. (2023). Impact of Globalization on the Society and Culture of the Northeast India. *Sprin Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(12), 52–57. <https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v2i12.175>

Copyright Notice:

© 2023 Author(s). This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), allowing third parties to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format and to remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially, provided the original work is properly cited and states its license.

ABSTRACT

The presence of diverse communities and tribal populations, each characterized by their unique customs and traditional culture, is a prominent characteristic of Northeast India. The lifestyle in the Northeast, particularly among its indigenous groups, diverges significantly from other ways of living. They possess distinct dietary preferences, engage in diverse occupations, and uphold separate cultural practices. Globalization exerts a significant influence on all aspects of life in the Northeast. The research aims to analyze the effects of globalization on the lifestyle and culture of these tribes. This study primarily focuses on examining the positive and negative impacts of globalization on the indigenous communities in the Northeastern region. Undoubtedly, the indigenous population of this region has benefited from globalization, primarily by avoiding exploitation and gaining improved living standards such as access to healthcare and education. However, it has also had adverse consequences on their traditions, cultures, and overall way of life in the Northeast.

Keywords: *Globalization, Northeast India, Tribal Communities, Culture, Tradition*

Introduction:

Globalization refers to the increased openness of economies to international trade, financial flows, and direct foreign investment. (A.P. Thirlwall, 2015, p. 15). The term 'globalization' means opening up of the economy for world market by attaining international competitiveness. (N, 2005, pp. 5-11) It simply indicates the interaction of the developing economies relating to production, trading and financial transactions with the developed economies of world. Globalization offers both challenges and opportunities to the developing economies. (Chutia, 2018) Globalization refers to an emerging "global culture" in which people more often consume similar goods and services across countries and use a common language

of business, English; these changes facilitate economic integration and are in turn further promoted by it. (Smith, 2017, p. 601)

The paper attempts to examine the impact of globalization on all aspects of human life directly or indirectly in tribal northeast regions. Globalization has tremendous impact on the indigenous culture and lifestyle of tribal society. The tribes, the original inhabitants of the region mostly live in forest, hills and other naturally isolated regions which are rich in mineral resources. The present study depicts both the positive and negative effect upon the tribal society.

Methodology:

The study is of descriptive type based on self-observations and secondary sources. The data obtained from various published books, records, reports and journals.

Objectives of the study:

1. To examine the impact on globalization on the dance forms, culture and costumes of the Hmar community.
2. To suggest measures to preserve the identity of the community.

Historical background

The North-East region of India is widely recognized as one of the most culturally heterogeneous areas on the planet. The territory is home to almost 200 tribes. Notable tribes in the northeast region include Bodo, Rabha, Raeng, Chakma, Kabui, Hmar, Angami, Lepcha, Bhutia, Wangcho, Khasi, Garo, and others. The Hmar tribe, also known as Mhar or Mar, resides in the northeastern region of India. The regions where they reside include Meghalaya, Mizoram, Cachar, Chittagong Hill Tracts, and Tripura. The Hmar Tribe traces its origins to a location known as Sinlung, which serves as the ancient homeland of Zonhnathlak. There is still a debate about whether they originated from Sinlung, but they ultimately departed from Sinlung, which was once a democratic nation. They were officially designated as a Scheduled Tribe under the 6th Schedule of the Constitution of India, which granted them status. (Report, 2017, pp. 1-10) The Hmar tribe is a part of the Chin-Kuki Mizo group of tribes and they inhabit the northeastern states. In 1910, Welsh Missionary Watkin Roberts brought Christianity to the Hmar Tribe, primarily located in the southern area of Manipur. The Hmar Tribe migrated from China and settled first in Burma and scattered in & around Manipur, Mizoram and North Cachar Hills in Assam. Hmars are of Mongoloid stock. Though the Hmar tribal Community is divided into exogamous clans they do not strictly adhere to exogamy. They strictly follow Monogamy. Arranged cum Love-Marriages are preferred. (Report, 2017, pp. 1-10) Hmar Tribe tradition is of revering dance forms, festivals, music etc. Their expertise is shown in the Conventional folk dance, folk songs that are nicely represented by scenes of adventure, battle, love, victory and other experiences throughout history. The culture is enriched with amazing tribalsongs and dance forms. Hmars build their villages on hill -tops & houses are constructed on wooden planks. Slash & burn system of agricultural practices is still at large by the Hmar Tribe. (Report, 2017)

Dance forms of Hmar tribe

The dances and music of the various hill tribes of NE India, both major and minor, add positively to the rich cultural heritage of the country.

i. Chawn-lam

This is the main dance of the Hmar tribes. Chawn-lam is a dance that is performed during the harvesting festival. It is performed both by male and female. The boys and girls are arranged systematically outside the dancing place. Each row is headed by leader of each gender. Then they enter the dancing ground. Each row jumps face to face according to the sounds of drums. Each dance has its specific style of drumming. Gong string, bell bangles are the additional musical instrument which make the dancing more pleasing. The boys are expert in beating the drums according to the need of the rhythmic tunes. Jumping, stepping and other activities pertaining to dance are done according to the line of song and rhythmic tunes of musical instruments.

ii. Dar-lamdance

This is a funeral dance which is performed when a chief person dies in the village. It is done to pay their last respect to the departed soul. The person of sixty to seventy years is considered important if he has served the society for the well being of the community. The procession is accompanied by musicians and dancers who perform this dance up to the graveyard. When the dead body is ultimately buried at funeral ground the procession comes back singing and dancing to the house of the family where in death had taken place.

iii. Pheipheet-lam

This dance is to celebrate the victory of raid or head hunting. This is a symbol of a mark of bravery and honour of the warriors. The hunted heads are hung in the courtyard of one of the warrior's house. The warriors wear their best clothes which has specific designs, put on headgear which is made up of red and black cotton, hold a gun in their hand and go around the post on the top of which the hunted heads are hung. Friends holding bamboo pipes accompany them. At the same time musicians are standing in a group in a corner and beating on drum, gong and bangles.

iv. Hrang-lam

This dance is performed jointly by both men and women. Women occupy places in between men. While dancing the warrior enters the ground, chanting the hunter's cry and fire gun shots. The other dancers go round the head thrice before taking a break. In this dance people erect a long bamboo over which the hunted head is hung. Dancing and singing continues day and night. During the dance the warrior enters in the middle, pulling the hand of his wife that appears to show like the flying of birds. It is followed by a scene where of weeping by the wife and her husband dries her tears.

Impact of globalization

The process of globalization creates the opportunity for the Northeastern tribes to integrate their culture with the modern life style of the developed areas or nations of the world. (Boro, 2006, pp. 3-5) In other words, due to globalization process the tribal communities of Northeast India have got the opportunity to integrate their culture, beliefs, customs and other traditions with the modern societies of the world. As a result, some positive reforms have come to the traditional societies of the Northeastern tribes. (Sen, 1985, p. 9) For example, some superstitions among the tribal communities are dying due to the impact of global world. On the other hand, the traditional folk music and folk dances of the tribal communities of Northeast India are well benefited by the forces of globalization. The traditional folk music of the Northeastern tribes has been able to get much popularity in the global world. Globalization

increases the quality of the traditional songs. (Pradip, 2020) For example the dance form of Pheipheet-lam, Hrang-lam has become popular in different parts of the world. Due to globalization these dance forms are performed at big events which have immensely increased their popularity.

Hmar folk songs

The Hmar people have been impacted by globalization in a distinct manner. The domain that has experienced significant impact is culture as a whole, with a specific emphasis on the realm of music. Hmar individuals have a deep affection for music and engage in singing songs, be it during religious gatherings or social events. The evolution of songs and music has occurred during the past 3-4 decades. The Hmar community, particularly the younger generation, exhibits a preference for Western melodies and music. (Jogesh, 1972) One of the issues pertains to folk songs and Hmar music. Conventional songs and music are currently seeing a decline in popularity, particularly among the younger generation. Indeed, exquisite Hmar musical instruments such as the khoung (drum), sielki (mithun horn), flute, rawsem pipe, and gongs are exceedingly scarce and difficult to come across in the present day. They have transformed into museum artifacts or exhibits for social events. This demonstrates the decline of traditional musical instruments, which have been supplanted by sophisticated and contemporary musical instruments brought from Western and Asian nations. In addition, Hmar's musical instruments are antiquated and rudimentary in comparison to contemporary and up-to-date musical instruments. Consequently, the Hmar community has a preference for musical instruments originating from Western nations as well as Korea. The Hmar community, particularly the younger generation, exhibits a preference for contemporary Korean and Western music over traditional Hmar songs. (Pradip, 2020) Currently, accessing and playing traditional Hmar musical instruments is exceedingly challenging and uncommon. Contemporary and sophisticated musical instruments, including as the keyboard, guitar, piano, drums, and others, have exerted dominance and enhanced the significance of Hmar music, surpassing the relevance of ancient musical instruments. (Deka, 2008) The preservation of traditional Hmar music faces a significant challenge, and without appropriate government intervention, it risks complete extinction in the foreseeable future.

Dress culture

According to the Hmar ancestors, women wear skirts such as Ngotlawng, (lower shirt for women, Hmar-puon (lower shirt for men and women), Mithipuon (scarf for women in funeral), Puonlaisen (the most decorated shawl for women), Fensen (cloth for women), Fenngo (cloth for women used as petticoats), Puonlaisente (small shawls for young girls), Puonropui (ornate shawls for women), etc. while men wear clothes called Dawnpuon (men's undershirt), Rukrak-puon (brave hunter's shawl), Tawlo-puon (brave men's shawl), Lukawm-var (white turban for men and women). The emergence of globalization has indeed brought change and led to advancements, especially in dress culture. In addition, the arrival of Christian missionaries seriously changed the lifestyle and dress culture of the Hmar tradition. Today, Hmar prefers to wear dresses sourced from products of multinational companies and multi-brand showrooms. They rarely wear dresses on important social occasions such as Butukhonglawm (spring festival), Lunglâk (autumn festival) and Sesun (solemn ceremony), etc.

Consequently, the Hmar community exhibits a preference for donning attire crafted from materials sourced from Western nations, Southeast Asia, and even mainland India, as opposed to their customary garments. In addition, the younger generation lacks familiarity and knowledge of their traditional attire. This issue is of great concern, since the lack of government support in promoting and safeguarding traditional costumes may lead to the eventual extinction of Hmar people's traditional attire.

Cultural preservation of Tribal people by Indian Government

1. To honor the bravery and patriotism of tribal people and to showcase the region's rich tribal cultural history as such acts of bravery can bring them together and strengthen social bonds which can lead to increased collaboration, support, and collective action for addressing various issues in society.
2. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has created a searchable digital repository where all academic papers, books, reports, and documents, as well as popular music and images and videos relevant to tribal people, are uploaded. This is done with the purpose of making sources of information regarding northeast available to the general public.
3. To give a glimpse of the rich cultural history of tribal people all around the country, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) funds state tribal festivals, fairs, and cultural programs which has immensely helped in popularizing the folk songs and dances of the tribes of northeastern people.
4. The Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (the PMJVM) scheme's Tribal Artisan Melas (TAMs) seek to identify new craftsmen and new goods at the sourcing level in States, Districts, and Villages in order to increase the base of tribal producers. This mission has helped lots of tribal craftsmen and artisans gain momentum and incentive in the field of craft production.
5. The Ministry gives funding to State Tribal Research Institutes to support the construction of primers, dictionaries, and collections of folklore and folktales as well as the promotion of tribal languages, dialects, and scripts which is another important step towards progress in any society because without curiosity and research progress would be slow.
6. According to the Ministry of Education, promoting all Indian languages, especially regional languages, is a key component of the National Education Policy. The Scheme for Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages of India (SPPEL) is a program started by the Indian government aimed at protecting the endangered languages from extinction.

Findings and Suggestions:

To safeguard the cultural identity of tribal communities in India, a multifaceted approach is vital. This involves integrating tribal history into mainstream education, promoting traditional cuisines and attire at events, and encouraging their presence in educational institutions. Actively educating the public on the significance of tribal events, allocating resources for language preservation and involving tribes in decision-making processes are crucial steps. Ensuring land rights protection, improving healthcare and social welfare in tribal areas, and supporting sustainable livelihoods aligned with cultural values contribute to overall well-being. Additionally, fostering accurate media portrayals and conducting awareness campaigns play pivotal roles in dispelling stereotypes and fostering appreciation. This

comprehensive strategy aims to protect and promote the diverse and invaluable cultural heritage of India's tribal communities.

Bibliography

- A.P. Thirlwall, P. P.-L. (2015). *Economics of Development, Theory and Evidence* . e book.
- Boro, A. (2006). *Globalization and Local Culture: The tribes of North East India* . Indian Folk .
- Chutia, S. (2018). Globalization and tribal identity crisis in north east India: A challenge. *International Journal of Advanced Educational Research Volume 3; Issue 5; September* , 14-17.
- Deka, M. (2008). Impact of Technology on Tribal Societies in Northeast India”.
- Jogesh, D. (1972). *Folklore of Assam*. National Book Trust, India.
- N, B. (2005). *Handbook of Urbanisation in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Pradip, B. (2020). A study on the impact of globalisation on the ethnic societies in north east India. *Journal of critical reviews* .
- Report. (2017). *Ethnographic Report The Hmars of Assam*. ASSAM INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH FOR TRIBALS AND SCHEDULED CASTES:.
- Sen, S. (1985). *Folklore in North East India*. Omsons Publication New Delhi.
- Smith, M. P. (2017). *Economic Development* (12 ed.). Pearson Education.