

“Globalization and its impact on ethnic culture of north-east India.”

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Abstract: -Globalization has a wide role to play worldwide. With every advancement of human approach, the globalization started on rooting its footprints at every place. In today's era the various means of telecommunication, social media and most importantly the internet has a big role to play in the spread of globalization. In relation to this culture and traditions of any geographic region hold a special significance with respect to its uniqueness and that is the differentiating factor for a population within a geographic boundary from the other. This uniqueness has been disturbed to the varying degrees in lieu of globalization. Such an impact is very much pronounced when they hit a developing country like India. Our deep rooted traditions and customs have loosened up their hold with the emergence of globalization.

The cultures of North East India are already facing tremendous challenges from education and modernization. In the evolution of such cultures and the identities that they embody, the loss of distinctive identity markers does not match well for the tribes of the region. Beyond and besides identity, we need to examine what happens to cultural products such as indigenous music, textile designs, handicrafts, herbal medicines, dance forms and so on under globalization? Can indigenous cultural products remain what they are or will they respond to the market forces and bring in economic prosperity to the people under globalization? These are some of the issues we need to ponder over when we think about globalization and its impact on tribes of North East and their cultures.

Key words: - advancement, footprints, differentiating factor, emergence, indiscriminate, ethnic, anonymity, indigenous, prosperity.

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I. Introduction:

Globalization is a process that cuts across the boundaries of nations, cultures and societies privileging a move towards larger integration of the world and facilitating interdependence moving towards a global culture. It has left back its footprints at every sphere of life. Not only in India, but the interchange of world views and ideas have resulted in a major transformation of the lifestyle and living standard of people globally, Indian culture is no bar to this transformation process. Our deep rooted traditions and customs have loosened up their hold with the emergence of globalization. India has a rich cultural background and pride of its culture is famous throughout the world. Globalization has not only inculcated the westernization in India, but conversely the Indian culture has also spread its impact globally. Culture and traditions of any geographic region hold a special significance with respect to its uniqueness and that is the differentiating factor for a population within a geographic boundary from the other. This uniqueness has been disturbed to the varying degrees in lieu of globalization. Such an impact is very much pronounced when they hit a developing country like India. The common charge against globalization is that it is an extension of western capitalism, empowered by free market economy which perpetuates neo-colonialism. Under its sway, the powerful force unleashes. It is often argued that preservation of cultures and identities in their undiluted state become impossible, resulting in alienation of identities on one hand and cultural chaos on the other. In such a scenario where the local and the global seem to overlap the discursive articulation of the difference of identities and social and cultural practices become more crucial. In the context of the tribes of Northeast, it is feared that globalization may bring in large-scale co modification of their cultures and would erase their unique identities that are so far consolidated mostly on the premise of ethnic difference.

Social and cultural impacts of globalization

As the world gets increasingly interconnected through globalization, many changes are taking place, some of which evade our attention mainly because we are more concerned about the economic and political impact of the phenomenon. Life as we know is changing; changes enter our lives thoughts, lifestyles and visions of others.

In this sense, globalization is a social and cultural process in which individuals of different cultural backgrounds interact with each other in all spheres of life more intensively than before. This integration is increasingly exposing people to different ways of thinking, cultural values and new forms of family life. Global trends such as co-operation in the same production or trade networks enable societies and individuals to know more of each other. As human communities share their experiences through the global networks of work and information, a greater cultural understanding develops that may help to improve the lives of individuals and their families.

One of the most interesting phenomenon's of globalization is the shaping of online communities. This process has led to the evolution of new identities for people around the world while disregarding where they live and what their nationality is. This is a new phase of acculturation. New ideas, new methods of work and good life and governance are being shared worldwide even in the most scheduled places of the globe. All of these changes have substantial impacts on the family because the family is the strategic social unit where division of labour, social role play, collective decisions for members and their future movements and development are decided on. Such decisions define the identities of family members and their interaction with the larger society. Moreover, all of these decisions may change, be debated, be renegotiated and their conflicts resolved. In other words, not only societal but intra-family issues are affected by globalization, now more than ever.

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Can indigenous cultural products remain what they are or will they respond to the market forces and bring in economic prosperity to the people under globalization?

The question that looms large and begs to be explored – can globalization with its promises of economic salvation override the political, cultural and religious salvation that this part of the country is questing for last fifty years or so?

These are some of the issues we need to ponder over when we think about globalization and its impact on tribes of Northeast and their cultures.

The nature of tribal cultures:

Indian tribes live in a variety of social situations and materials environments and belong to four main ethnic groups, Dravidian, Australoid, Negroid and Mongoloid. Because of these differences, their worldview also differs. Since their languages, dances and songs as well other customs are external forms of their social and natural environment, each tribe expresses itself in its own way. War songs and dances predominate among some tribes, hunting in a few and harvesting among others. These differences account for their diversity and richness. Amid such diversity there are commonalities in the foundation and value system of tribal communities, but rarely in their external expressions. First, all the tribal cultures have the natural resources of land, forest and water as their foundation. Around them they have built a world view, social system, and set of customs, economy and sustenance. Together these form their livelihood and give them an identity which is expressed in their culture.

Because a culture involves adaptation to its surroundings, it cannot be static but keeps changing according to the situation. An important change today is globalization, which impacts every fact of life in India and the world over. It affects the tribal communities more than the others because their regions are rich in natural and mineral resources, which are exploited more than in the past for profit alone, without the tribal's getting any benefit. A change of culture is basic to the globalized economy and the tool used today is the information technology. Globalization results in a change over from the tribal ethos to a totally new culture and system and without adequate preparation slowly the tribal communities absorb the value system of this culture. This apparent absence of alternatives increases the sense of helplessness of the tribals who are among the worst victims of globalization and legitimize the consumerist society which impoverishes them.

Impact of globalization and modernity on the indigenous tribes of North-east:

North East India has always been known as a land with diverse and rich culture. It is a region of co-existence of extreme forms of both tradition and modernity. Ethnically the tribes of North-East belong to the Indo-Mongoloid race. Studies in tribal identity and ethnicity of the North-East are ever increasing with more emphasis given to the indigenous youth of the eight states who are caught in a situation of social and political unrest. Unfortunately, their potential and competence as individuals and as a group have not been fully noticed and properly tapped. Their participation in the process of dialogue and nation building is negligible. Given the present and rapid transformation of technology and social culture, the tribal youth living in a globalized and modern world are in danger of being lured away from their customs and forced to embrace another set of values and blindly follow western culture.

In this context, the present work is an attempt to contribute to the ever increasing literature on the ethnicity, identity and culture of the people of North-East India. A survey was carried out on the youth of all the

eight North Eastern states coming from both rural and urban areas with the help of a structured questionnaire. This paper attempts to focus on the issue of social and cultural impacts of globalization in north east region. Issues related to family, language, area of origin, years of exposure to urban settings, educational and academic aspirations, dress and food habits, attitudes toward marriage, aware of one's own culture and traditional practices, usage of modern technology etc. are some of the factors that have been studied.

Here, descriptive analysis method is used by the investigator and on the basis of the responses of the respondents some suggestions are given which will help to protect the distinct identity and cultural diversity of the North East people.

Globalization and new culture

The globalization processes have serious implications for the culture of the tribal's. The alienation of the land and other resources which are both their physical sustenance and the Centre of their culture, is an attack on their very identity. Besides, globalization imposes an homogeneous consumerist culture and value system in society. It combines individualism with a culture where everyone looks after his/her own interests at the cost of others. This value system and culture is very far from the tribal culture of equity and sharing. However, recent processes have resulted in the deterioration of the tribal lifestyles and cultural changes have become tools of legitimization. The tools of cultural propagation like the mass media have become means of spreading this message. Consumerism is the basis of this global culture. The tribal communities in general and the women among them have become its worst victims.

In today's situation, the tribal communities are tempted to accept the false set of values brought about by globalization. This is where one needs to look at culture as a political tool. It has to be turned into an instrument of preventing the impoverishment of tribal communities by globalization. To achieve this, tribal communities need to go back beyond the externals of their songs and dances, through which they can search for an alternative. They must return to the care value system of their cultures and choose a new set of values based on it, in order to find relevant alternatives to consumerism and the selfishness which globalization generates. In other words, they have to begin with the spirit of sharing, the sustainable use of their livelihood and the women's higher status and take their whole community towards equality.

The phenomenon of globalization is looked upon by many as a new form of encroachment on the local or regional territories. It is never free from its own perils and fissures. That is the critics of globalization out right castigate it as an evil and the enemy of human progress and democracy. We need to look at globalization from the point of view of its impact on local indigenous cultures. According to Herman, globalization has two-fold ways of interaction with local culture, that is, through the process of –

- a) Homogenization and
- b) Cosmopolitanism

In the former situation globalization either eliminates local elements or incorporates them without acknowledging it.

In the second situation it may incorporate and celebrate local elements. Here a situation arises where the global and the local overlap and the discursive articulation of difference between the self and the other becomes problematic.

As we come to the tribes of North East, globalization has already made an inroad into the life and culture of its people. The globalized market economy as well as the entertainment industry has already encroached upon the traditional culture and the life style of the people of the region. Hence, some people have expressed the fear that large scale co modification of their cultures would erase their unique identities. Globalization cannot be simply measured from the set binaries of globalism and localism. It has depended the problematic of the linguistic terms like global and local, indigenous and heterogeneous, universal and particular. There are two views that comes out from the whole debate on globalization –

- a) That it is a force that will erase unique identities and traditions.
- b) That it is an opportunity for unhindered trade and commerce and economic empowerment.

The preservation of Assam's cultural heritage requires a multi- faceted approach that addresses the complex challenges posed by modernization, globalization, and socio economic disparities .the culture and heritage of Assam stand as a testament to the region's enduring legacy of diversity, resilience, and vibrant traditions. From the majestic Brahmaputra River to the verdant hills and dense forests, Assam's geographical landscape mirrors the richness of its cultural tapestry. Throughout history, the land has been shaped by the influences of mighty dynasties, indigenous communities, and a myriad of ethnic groups, each contributing to the unique identity of the region. The artistic heritage of Assam is showcased through its exquisite handloom textiles, intricate crafts, and timeless architectural marvels, reflecting the creativity and craftsmanship of its people. Festivals like Bihu, Durga Puja, and Ali-Ai-Ligang bring communities together in celebration, fostering a sense of unity and communal harmony. However, amidst the celebrations and cultural festivities, Assam also faces the challenges of preserving its heritage in the face of modernization and globalization. It is imperative to recognize the

importance of safeguarding traditional crafts, languages, and customs, ensuring that future generations inherit a legacy that is rich in cultural diversity and heritage. As Assam marches towards the future, it is essential to embrace progress while cherishing the timeless traditions and values that define its cultural ethos. By fostering a deep appreciation for its cultural heritage and promoting inclusivity and diversity, Assam can continue to shine as a beacon of cultural vibrancy and resilience, captivating the world with its timeless charm and unparalleled beauty.

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II. Suggestions: -

Keeping in view the opportunities globalization offer, we have to examine in perspective what happens to some of the cultural products of the tribes of the North East. Following are some suggestions to protect the ethnic culture of North East –

1. Eco-tourism and package tours to ethnic places can immensely help this. The Bodo Autonomous Council (BTC) and the Mishing Autonomous Council (MAC) or any other local autonomous body for that matter can play the pioneering role in this. If the colorful folk dances and performing traditions need to be showcased in the global context the autonomous bodies, and the department of the government must take initiative to protect the ethnic culture.

2. Preservation of cultural heritage of the smaller communities is an important aspect which we must not lose sight of. The ethnic communities and their cultural heritage have a distinct uniqueness and they should be empowered to negotiate for their rights over the folk products in any transaction.

3. There is the necessity to protect the rights over own ethnic textile products, for example, Bodo Dokhona made of the finest pat silk and muga silk and the best Mishing mekhela and the ribi gacheng and galuk have become a craze in the market. In case these products are not patented, the producers of the materials at the local level will lose their commercial potentiality and also there is the danger of their product being hijacked. Recently, there is an alarming talk of patenting the textile items those are locally produced in the name of geographical indicators. This initiative will help the practitioners of the traditional arts and crafts to protect the rights over their traditional products.

4. Like the textiles, food products and beverages, the ethnic groups produce can be patented and launched for the Far Eastern and global market. This is an area where the Autonomous Councils and District Councils and NGO's can work together for the benefit of the community and can employ thousands of local uneducated youths.

III. Conclusion: -

To conclude we can call globalization as a slow spreading risk factor that has covered almost the entire country with its severity. With some positivity of having a generalized knowledge of the culture throughout the world and the happening and incidences globally, still the major negative impacts are quite alarming for our country. We are exploiting the term globalization in the name of progress, reason and science but we are forgetting that it is our culture that differentiates us from any other country. There are various terrible things that are taking place in the name of globalization, such as theft, drugs, narcotics etc. The western culture, with its desired pursuit of markets and commodities eliminates all true culture, which is based on quality and not quantity. In the context of NorthEast in spite of claims of uniqueness of an identity, the identities have undergone tremendous evolution and have been hybridized with or without ethno-politics of exclusivity. However, it is necessary to understand their evolution and the transition and transformations that have shaped

the Ao Naga, the Mizo and Arunachalee identities. We are all aware that in the age of late capitalism, culture itself is nothing but a commodity in filtered by exchange value. We want to be part of the borderless economic continuum, but at the same time, let us be who we are. Our cultural identities are not for sale or commercial influence. It is true that identities and cultural products are valuable for preservation but such a position also seeks an answer to the question how does an identity negotiate with cultural change. If we are not given a choice to opt for what is good for us and renounce what is not how can an identity gain in authenticity. Hence, our resistance should be strategic not political. These are some of the issues we need to ponder over when we think about globalization and its impact on tribes of Northeast and their ethnic cultures.

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