

Impact of Globalization on Traditional Knowledge Systems: A Study on the Art and Craft of the Bodo Community

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Abstract

Globalization has profoundly influenced indigenous knowledge systems, both endangering and invigorating them. This paper investigates how globalization affects the traditional art and craft practices of the Bodo community in Assam. Drawing on academic studies, fieldwork findings, and policy reports, it explores both positive outcomes such as expanded market access and cultural visibility and negative consequences including diminished traditional techniques, youth disengagement, and competition from mass-produced alternatives (Mochahary, 2024; Basumatary and Khawzawl, 2024). Bodo artisans, once reliant on locally sourced bamboo and handloom weaving, now adapt to new tools, designs, and consumer preferences prompted by globalized markets (Daimari and Shaw, 2023). While some practitioners have integrated modern motifs or e-commerce channels, others have experienced a decline in craftsmanship and cultural identity (Dutta, 2023). The paper applies a mixed-methods approach: literature synthesis and qualitative analysis of case studies to pinpoint areas where globalization disrupts or reinforces Bodo traditions. Finally, it recommends culturally-sensitive policies, capacity-building workshops, and digital platforms to revitalize Bodo art forms while preserving their intangible heritage. The study contributes a nuanced understanding of the tension between economic inclusion and cultural integrity within globalization's reach.

Keywords: Globalization, Bodo crafts, Traditional knowledge, Cultural resilience, Handloom & bamboo arts

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Introduction

Globalization, defined by the increasing interdependence of economies, cultures, and society, has had far-reaching consequences for indigenous populations worldwide. One major source of concern is its impact on Traditional Knowledge Systems (TKS), which are collections of wisdom passed down through generations and strongly rooted in local culture, setting and social activities. These systems serve not only as stores of ecological and cultural information, but also as the foundation of many tribal and indigenous populations' identities. Traditional knowledge has historically served as both a cultural asset and a source of income for Assam's Bodo group, which is noted for its rich heritage in loom weaving and bamboo crafts.

However, globalization has resulted in complex challenges. On the one hand, it provides prospects for economic development and cultural interchange. On the other hand, it threatens the survival of traditional practices by frequently replacing or commercializing

them to meet global consumer tastes (Basumatary and Khawzawl, 2024). This article investigates how globalization has transformed the Bodo community's art and craft traditions, focusing on economic, cultural, and generational changes. It seeks to determine if globalization factors have increased or weakened the sustainability of these knowledge systems, as well as the implications for the preservation of culture and policy in indigenous contexts.

Literature Review

The impact of globalization on traditional knowledge systems has been studied by scholars from various fields, including anthropology and development studies. Numerous studies have stressed how global economic integration threatens indigenous identities and destroys long-held traditions. Basumatary and Khawzawl (2024) describes how the increased availability of synthetic materials and contemporary production techniques has resulted in a gradual

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decline in the usage of traditional raw materials such as bamboo and natural dyes in the Bodo community.

Dutta (2023) explores the symbolic and practical significance of Bodo handloom weaving, specifically the dokhona (a traditional garment). According to him, women weavers were formerly in charge of sophisticated weaving patterns that stored clan identities and oral history. With the rise of global consumerism, many of these motifs have been reduced or replaced to fit external market demands. Similarly, **Daimari and Shaw (2023)** observes that, while some Bodo artisans have profited from involvement in regional fairs and internet platforms, such visibility has frequently come at the expense of authenticity.

Studies conducted in broader situations support this trend. **Narza Baro (2025)**, who studied tribal groups in Northeast India, claims that globalization encourages a transition from "knowledge for sustenance" to "knowledge for market." This commoditization frequently marginalizes traditional knowledge bearers who do not have access to digital technologies or a formal education. Further, **Narza Baro (2025)** describes hybrid environment in which tradition and innovation coexist, such as Bodo youth adopting traditional elements into fashion and social media branding. These hybrid expressions imply that traditional knowledge systems are not completely disappearing, but rather developing in response to globalization.

Several scholars have also warned against romanticizing tradition. According to **Mochahary (2024)**, concentrating solely on preservation while ignoring innovation risks stagnation. Instead, she advocates for dynamic frameworks that promote cultural resilience, allowing artisans to modernize their work while maintaining cultural depth. These considerations are especially important in Bodo communities, where traditional arts are not just aesthetic but also essential to festivals, rituals, and social cohesion.

Research Gap / Problem Statement

Despite the existing literature on indigenous knowledge and globalization, there has been no concentrated analysis of how globalization affects the Bodo community's artisan practices. Majority of research efforts either generalizes the impact across Northeast Indian tribes or focus on economic variables, ignoring the cultural and symbolic features of traditional knowledge. This research fills that vacuum by focusing on the Bodo artists' lived experiences and examining how indigenous

knowledge systems adapt, resist, or mix with global influences. The primary issue is whether globalization improves the future sustainability of Bodo traditional arts or undermines their cultural and economic basis.

Findings and Discussion

Field observations and secondary data demonstrate that the impact of globalization on Bodo art and craft are neither entirely negative nor entirely positive. Conversations with artisans in Kokrajhar and Baksa districts, for example, show a significant drop in youth engagement in handloom weaving, owing mostly to higher-paying urban occupations and the shame associated with physical craft labor (**Daimari and Shaw, 2023**). At the same time, a few weavers have used e-commerce platforms to sell dokhona and bamboo jewelry beyond state borders, gaining reputation and cash previously unthinkable.

The emergence of synthetic dyes and machine-loomed textiles has enhanced productivity while decreasing costs. However, many craftsmen lament the loss of authenticity and spiritual worth inherent in ancient processes (**Dutta, 2023**). Traditional crafts are still featured at festivals such as Bwisagu, but their purpose is becoming more ceremonial rather than fundamental to daily life. Craft schools founded by NGOs have had mixed results: while they conserve skills, they frequently fail to provide market connections or inspire younger generations to pursue the profession.

Another finding addresses design transformation. Many traditional designs are being customized to suit modern fashion trends, particularly among urban Bodo youth. While this indicates creativity and relevance, opponents warn that excessive adaptation risks separating the crafts from their cultural roots (**Deka, 2021**). Notably, Bodo women continue to play an important role as custodians of weaving traditions, albeit many now weave part-time to balance their domestic duties with small-scale commercial manufacturing.

Government measures such as cultural expos, subsidies, and training have offered a moderate boost. However, a lack of culturally responsive policies frequently yields one-size-fits-all solutions. According to **Mochahary (2024)**, indigenous craftspeople require more than just skill development, but also a forum that recognizes the uniqueness of their knowledge systems.

Conclusion

This paper examines the two-fold nature of globalization's impact on the Bodo community's traditional art and craft. While it has created new

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markets and encouraged adaptive creativity, it has also hastened cultural dilution, generational estrangement, and commodification. The issue is to build cultural resilience without locking customs in time. Future statutes must encourage innovation based on cultural values, ensuring that Bodo traditional knowledge advances without being eliminated.

Ethics: This study is based exclusively on analysis of published scholarly sources, observational and publicly available cultural knowledge. No private data were involved. All sources are acknowledged in accordance with MLA academic standards. The author affirms the originality of the work and expresses respect for the cultural heritage and intellectual traditions of the Bodo community.

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