



Globalisation and its Impact on Youth in Bodo Society

Rituraj Basumatary

Research Scholar
Dept. of Political Science
Bodoland University

Anu Rani Brahma (Ph.D)

Dept. of Political Science
Gossaigaon College.

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I. Introduction

Globalization has reshaped Bodo Society in Assam, driving a shift from traditional - agrarian lifestyle to a modern - consumerist one. While it provides Bodo Youth¹ with better education, wider career prospects and digital connectivity, it also presents challenges like the erosion of traditional craftsmanship and cultural identity. The flow of ideas, opinion, culture, technology, etc. in the interconnected world has influenced the identity formation of the youths and their worldview. The acceleration of Globalisation has also created both opportunities and economic tensions as the world economy got integrated through trade, capital flow, technology, etc.

The term globalisation in the contemporary discourses is widely used to describe the interconnectedness of culture, economy, social, political, etc. that has brought changes to the world in the last few decades. Steger refers Globalisation as a 'multidimensional set of social processes that simultaneously foster in people a growing awareness of deepening connections between the local and the distant while simultaneously creating, multiplying, stretching, and intensifying worldwide social interdependencies and exchanges' (Steger, 2003, p.13). International Monetary Fund (IMF) has defined 'Globalisation as the growing economic interdependence of countries worldwide through increasing volume and variety of cross border transactions in goods and services and of international capital flows and also through the more rapid and widespread diffusion of technology' (IMF, 1997, p.45). According to Stiglitz, 'Globalisation is the closer integration of the countries and peoples of the world which has been brought about by the enormous reduction of costs of transportation and communications, and the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flow of goods and services, capital, knowledge, and (to a

lesser extent) people across borders' (Stiglitz, 2002, p.9).

Oral Definition of Youth in Bodo Society

In traditional Bodo society, youth is not defined by a strict age bracket, but by social duties, readiness for marriage and initiation into community labor (Basumatary, 2022). Like other societies in Northeast India, age is not a defining basis of youth, rather the 'generational principle is taken into account' (Nongkynrih, 2009). The member of this group in the society is known by different terms or connotation. In Bodo society, this specific group of young people is called *Laimwn*. The term *Laimwn* is referred to the group of social actors who are unmarried (irrespective of age), with less burden of family responsibilities while taking active part in collective and community services. Transition into youth was historically marked by community-based training, where young men and women learned weaving, agriculture and village defense.

Key Markers of Bodo Youth

- **Age and Puberty:** Youth generally begins with the attainment of puberty. For boys, this period signalled the beginning of heavier agricultural labor and community protection and for girls, it signalled readiness to learn traditional weaving, cooking and household management.
- **Marriage and Social Adulthood:** The transition out of youth is traditionally defined by marriage. Once a young man or woman takes a life partner, they take the roles of married householders and responsibilities fully integrating into the village council (*Samaj*) (Basumatary, 2022). Unlike other tribes in the region, traditional institution such as the communal dormitories for unmarried men has long ceased to exist in the Bodo society (Endle, 1911), which serves as a key



institution for defense, social, cultural, education and integration of the community.

- **Cultural and Agricultural Participation:** Youth is considered a time of physical vigor and is tied to participation in various agricultural activities and seasonal festivals like *Bwisagu*. Young members of the community are highly involved in the preparations, community feasts, traditional Bodo music and performing arts.

Key impacts of globalization on Bodo youth include:

Economic Transformation

Globalization has transformed Bodo youth, offering unprecedented economic mobility and digital connectivity while challenging traditional roots. The access to modern education and global markets has sparked an entrepreneurial shift and changes to the traditional economy. It has led to the side-lining of traditional crafts and localized knowledge due to mass-produced alternatives and urban migration. Similarly, forest driven economy has also faced challenges due to excessive exploitation of natural resources and displacement due to rapid development.

Shift to Service and Startup Sectors: The shift from a barter and subsistence farming system to a commercial and market-driven economy has prompted youth to pursue diverse professional careers beyond agriculture. Driven by the digital revolution and better education, many Bodo youth are moving away from traditional agrarian economy toward tech, retail and service-based jobs. Platforms like e-commerce have enabled artisans in districts like Kokrajhar and Baksa to market traditional items—such as dokhona (traditional attire) and bamboo crafts—to global audiences, opening up previously unthinkable revenue streams. It is also important to note herethat while Globalisation has exposed its traditional craft to the wider market on the other hand higher-paying urban jobs and a social stigma attached to physical craft labor have caused a decline in youth participation in traditional handloom weaving and farming.

Urban Migration: The pursuit of higher education and corporate employment has led to a significant outward migration of Bodo youth to cities across India, reshaping household dynamics and local community structures.

Cultural Shift: With the exchange of ideas, values, norms and practices, culture from across the world has come into close proximity. The mainstream cultures are penetrating into the tribal culture thus becoming dominant at the cost of others. Due to

Globalisation world has increasingly got interconnected, so does the process of unification of economy, technology and cultural homogenization. Globalisation and modernization has introduced new food habits, attire and a consumerist mindset and alien culture that has influenced the tribal culture like Bodos leading to the erosion of traditional value systems, their way of life and indigenous's practices.

Arts and Crafts Disruption: Young artisans are adapting by using new designs, modern tools and e-commerce platforms to reach global markets. However, this has also contributed to a decline in authentic craftsmanship and local knowledge. Handcrafted textiles and indigenous bamboo works are losing their fundamental place in daily Bodo life as synthetic, machine-loomed and mass-produced alternatives become more readily available and affordable. It has accelerated the process of obliteration of local production and market system. In the face of globalisation, there emerged an unsustainable consumption and production pattern that deeply affected the forest based livelihood of Bodos which also has caused loss of bio-diversity.

Cultural Hybridization: Cultural hybridization is the fusion of two or cultures forming a new cultural identity or form. Globalisation has facilitated the flow of global culture across the national borders through different and interrelated dimensions (Appadurai, 1996). However, it has also created an identity crisis for the local culture in preserving their distinct and rich cultural heritage and traditions. Bodos have a distinct tribal culture with rich tradition, customs and practices. While festivals like *Bwisagu* (the spring festival) are still celebrated, youth increasingly embrace pan-Indian and global festivities, resulting in a hybrid cultural identity that blends indigenous heritage with global consumerism.

Language and Media: Social media and the dominance of the English language have transformed communication, leading to fears of erosion of their own language and oral history transmission among younger, urban-dwelling generations.

II. Conclusion

Globalisation has profoundly influenced the Bodo community in Assam, accelerating the transition from a traditional and self-sufficient agrarian society to a modernized and market-driven economy. This dynamic interplay brings both opportunities and challenges across cultural identity,



economic practices and traditional knowledge. It has impacted the youth in Bodo society in different ways like the way of their lifestyle, change in their outlook and mind-set due to introduction of formal education, exposure to new economic system and so on.

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