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A Study on Globalisation and Ethnic Women of North-East India

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Abstract

Globalisation is the process of widening, deepening and speeding up worldwide interconnectedness. It makes the world borderless and it brings changes all over the world. India is also not free from it as the impacts of globalisation are found all over India including North-East India.

The life styles of ethnic women are very different, their food habits, working styles are also different. Globalisation influences every aspect of our lives. Earlier people doesn't know about others culture, lifestyles, they live with their own. But they come to know about others culture because of globalisation. Traditional skill and knowledge of ethnic women is the acquired knowledge of them through time and pace.

Globalisation is creating a market for fresh ideas and voices, but again it creates threat for the women of their confidentiality of most private and sacred knowledge. With globalisation, a global cultural system is emerged in our society. Globalisation not always play negative role rather sometimes this culture is beneficial in upholding diverse traditional skill and knowledge of the ethnic women of North-East. This system has both positive and negative implications over it. Therefore it is important to study its impacts on the traditional skill and knowledge of Ethnic women.

Keywords: - Globalisation, Ethnic women, Impacts, Traditional skill and Knowledge, North-East India.

Introduction: The North-East region is a diverse region of India. It is a true frontier region. It has over 2000 km of border with Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh and is connected to the rest of India by a narrow 20 km wide corridor of land. Ecologically this region is somewhat unique in comparison to other parts of India. High Mountain, snow bound region, deep forest, undulated terrain, networks of rivers and rivulets, plateau and plain land with high rainfall moist weather have given this region a unique feature. North-East is the one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions in India, each state have its distinct cultures and traditions.

The North-East India with over 220 ethnic groups and tribes as well as equal number of dialects makes it a hugely diverse region. All these people have their unique style of living. They have different types of settlements, different livelihood patterns, different systems of social structures, life-cycle patterns, and different systems of social control, different regions and ethics. Their cultures, languages, food habits are different and much attractive. It attracts the outsiders and other researchers to come and research on them. The ethnic and cultural diversities have marked their life unique.

Ethnic women of North-East India have different kinds of traditional skills and knowledge. For example the Naga women in their traditional clothing skill, other ethnic women with their food habits as well as handicrafts skill etc. Now a day the traditional knowledge of the ethnic women of North-East India has been greatly appreciated and recognised in the society.

The present era of the world is the era of globalisation; that means the whole world transform into a village. It connects all the parts of the whole world. Very easily due to globalisation, it is now easy for one to get information and have knowledge about others cultures, lifestyles etc. India has been entering into the era of globalisation after adopting economic liberal policy since 1991. As a result globalisation flows into every parts of India. However this process is same throughout India. The impact is seen in the North-East India too; but some areas are more impacted than the others.

Traditional skill and knowledge of ethnic women: The skill and knowledge of the Ethnic women of North-East India are as rich as those of the communities elsewhere. Tribal societies of the North-Eastern uplands display and astonishing appreciation of their immediate environments and the enmeshing of their livelihood pursuits with the surrounding forests and forest-related activities suggest an amazing understanding of the workings of these systems under the given set of environmental conditions.

North-East tribal community have a long tradition of dependency on forests for their various requirements. Several ethnic communities of North-East India have invented the traditional technology of converting protein rich soybeans into flavoured fermented food with easy digestibility and bio-nutrients. This is exclusively carried out by the ethnic women in Sikkim, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. Tribes cultivate diverse food crops like cereals/millet, legumes, oilseeds etc. Besides, a few uncommon food crops such as judumulu, dukka, chikkudu and rajkeera seeds are also grown by them. Apart from staple gains, the tribal people also store wild foods such as mushroom, bamboo shoot, caryota, palm pith etc. Sun drying is the common treatment adopted for all foods prior to storage; pulses are included in their diets occasionally.

Weaving is the world of women and it is culturally considered as women's job in the home. It is found in the North-East India; both in the plains and hill communities in general and Arunachal Pradesh in particular. All communities maintain the tradition of weaving, which is basically colourful lain loon traditions and at present this is a part of cultural identity. The tribal communities of that state are mostly weave cotton and earlier there were tradition of use of other natural fibres and barks for making cloths. The knowledge, now of simple loin loon technology is part of traditional knowledge and that nature's friendly technology handy and low cost. Post independent era of development brought some changes in the weaving traditions and technology and at present women are to an extent depending on market for raw material.

Traditionally weaving is a household activity for every woman in Assam. Silk industry is one of the largest industries where women workers depend heavily for their livelihood. In many areas in the states, this is their informal activity. The industry provides a good source of earning mostly for the women. The association between women and silk industry in the state is age-old. The skill and knowledge of weaving is considered as an important qualification of a young girl for her eligibility for marriage.

Assamese women weave Mekhelas, Rihās etc. In tribal areas Kumbung, Kocha lufung among Rabha Tribe, Dakhna among Bodo. Therefore, it is found that the Ethnic women of North-East India have different kinds of traditional skill and knowledge.

Impacts of globalisation on the traditional skill and knowledge of Ethnic Women: The impact of globalisation on the handicrafts, weaving as well as on the food habits plays a crucial role in the

North-East India. In earlier time the traditional skill and knowledge of ethnic women were limited to their own locality and to their own life. They make things for themselves only and for their family. As the era of globalisation started, it helps them to show or prove their talent to the other states as well as in the international level. They can sale their things in different places because of globalisation.

Silk industries and other industries are built now a day. Globalisation gives employment opportunities, more earning capacity for women. In the very beginning it is found that globalisation helps the ethnic women to share their talents in the outside and make them self sufficient as well as empowerment is given to them. Women can be seen equally in the industries as men. In somewhere women are more than men. For example, in Sualkuchi (Kamrup district, Assam), a weaver's village established under the sponsorship of the Ahom Kings, unlike in other places, women rather than men used to sit in the loom. To make clothes, that means to increase their income and globalisation helps them to get it.

As time passes, it is found that the impacts of globalisation in a negative sense. It creates many problems for the ethnic women. For example more pressure on the women workers in the different industries to produce more in less time. It is claimed that women both as consumers and producers are placed at a disadvantage under the regime of globalisation. The incidence of income poverty among women is said to be increasing compared to that among men. There has also been an increase in migration of ethnic women, in search of employment in other places; where they face the danger of exploitation and inhuman treatment. Globalisation has been blamed to have increased the incidence of unemployment and underemployment among women and also have rise to many forms of discrimination.

In the present day it is found that the things made by the Ethnic women lost its importance as same type of clothes and other things is made by other states in a very cheap price. Reference can be given to the Sualkuchi (Kamrup district, Assam) incident or case.

When it is found that the clothes, which are made by them are not brought by the people as some same type of clothes are imported from Varanasi and Mysore worth crores. Therefore their talent got hurt and this is because of globalisation. It opens up the boundaries, now it is very easy for others to sale their things in other places in a lesser price than their existing price of the things in that place. With this problem, another problem related to eye problem, health etc is increasing among the weavers in the industry. During the festive season, they even work continuously for three to four hours. So, they make many items and sale it in a big number. This affects not only their health but also decreases their efficiency.

Many western cultures are also imposed in India. North East India is not free from it. Reference can be made to this traditional food habits or food items. As there is the process of globalisation, food culture or food habits of West such as KFC, McDonald's etc are opened in North East India. Now a day people are usually going for these. Therefore, the interest for the traditional food items is decreasing day by day.

The impacts of globalisation on the traditional skill and knowledge of ethnic women is found in both positive and negative sense. While in the one hand it is helping them but on the other hand it creates a lot of difficulties for them.

Conclusion: Though globalisation brings the traditional knowledge and skill into the global market, but it poses threat to them as it tries to merge their ethnic identity into global identity. As a result the uniqueness of their skill and knowledge get hampered. So it is found that globalisation supports free

market economy and this development is uneven. So, they do not get the actual reward for this. But their knowledge and skill are very much important and therefore it should be tried to preserve.

The government machinery should come out heavily on solving the problems related to credit, healthcare, food, etc. To cope up with the international competition, adequate training facilities should be arranged locally to infuse innovativeness in the industry.

It is very much difficult to deal with each and every problem or aspect of the ethnic women. In spite of this it should be tried to solve at least some of the problems of them. Their traditional skill and knowledge is very much unique for North-East India. Therefore every possible step should be taken to preserve it, otherwise some day it will be disappeared.

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