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# Globalization And It's Effect On Indigenous Knowledge

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## Abstract:

Globalization was a phenomenon that changed the scenario of each country and opened boundaries and borders without any barriers or restrains. Globalization was a much needed policy to open trade doors among the countries but it also opened dispute doors and at that point of time proper and adequate laws were not prevalent especially in relation to Intellectual Property Rights and more specifically Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous People. This research article aims to find answers with what impact has Globalization caused over the Indigenous knowledge and whether the current regimes present at the International Level are sufficient for the Indigenous People's protection. The First Part of this research paper introduces as to what globalization means and Traditional Knowledge is and how are they inter-related to each other. The Second Part of the research paper aims to analyse what impact has globalization has caused over Traditional Knowledge and its holders over the years. The Third Part of the research paper aims to analyse the instruments for protection over the years for Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous People and to analyse the current instruments are sufficient enough for protecting the Rights of the Indigenous People in this globalized era. The Fourth Part of the research paper is the conclusion of the article stating the impacts.

**Keywords:** Impact & Effect of Globalization on Indigenous Communities, International initiatives to protect Indigenous communities and their Knowledge

## Introduction

Globalization was a big change for all countries all of the world it not only opened trade doors but also a wide variety of the social, cultural and legal changes were brought in every country due this phenomena but what does Globalization mean, it refers to "the growing interconnection of nations' economies. It represents the flow of financial products, goods, technology, information, and jobs across national borders and cultures. In economic terms, it describes an interdependence of countries around the globe fostered through [free trade](#)."<sup>1</sup>This process led to cross boundary relations to open which meant free usage without having any legal boundations over it.

Globalization opened various barriers and these phenomena mostly profited developing countries and helped their economies grow due to most direct foreign investment due to cheap available labour but at the same time it also caused severe exploitation of land of the Indigenous People and their Traditional Knowledge.

To break it down Indigenous people "are distinct social and cultural groups that share collective ancestral ties to the lands and natural resources where they live, occupy or from which they have been displaced. The land and natural resources on which they depend are inextricably linked to their identities, cultures, livelihoods, as well as their physical and spiritual well-being. They often subscribe to their customary leaders and organizations for representations that are distinct or separate from those of the mainstream society or culture."<sup>2</sup> and these are the People that have abundance of Traditional Knowledge, which they are holders.

Traditional Knowledge is "is employed to mean knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional life-styles; the wisdom developed over many generations of holistic traditional scientific utilization of the lands, natural resources, and environment. It is generally passed down by word of mouth, from generation to generation and is, for the most part,

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<sup>1</sup> Kolb, Melina, and Trade and Investment Policy Watch Editor. 'What Is Globalization?', 29 October 2018. <https://www.piiie.com/microsites/globalization/what-is-globalization>.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank. 'Indigenous Peoples'. Text/HTML. Accessed 12 August 2024. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples>.

undocumented”<sup>3</sup> though there has been a accepted definition of Traditional Knowledge at the WIPO though it has been the need of the hour to define Traditional Knowledge but for the basic understanding the aforesaid definition is exhaustive.

The Indigenous People are the real and original owners of Traditional Knowledge and these tribes/people due to their cultural and rich heritage has aced in Modern medicine. Therefore are the most prone people around the world as they are easily exploited due to unawareness of their rights available before law. Globalization was one such phenomenon where the exploitation not only took place but also was doubled and the Indigenous People unawareness of their rights couldn't even access their legal rights in a court of law for the same.

Globalization has had a profound impact on the communities worldwide include those in India. Though the world became more closer and interconnected through Trade, Technology and Cultural exchange, the communities faces both opportunities along with challenged and had a very tough time in adapting to these rapid changes. India is home to a diverse array of indigenous communities, known as Adivasis or Scheduled Tribes, comprising over 104 million people spread across various states<sup>4</sup>. These communities have a rich cultural heritage, traditional knowledge systems, and close ties to their ancestral lands. However, the process of globalization has brought about significant changes to their way of life

“Globalization has also contributed to the erosion of indigenous cultures in India. The influx of mass media, popular culture, and consumerism has led to the dilution of traditional values, languages, and practices”<sup>5</sup>. Many indigenous youth are increasingly adopting mainstream cultural norms, leading to a generational divide and the loss of intergenerational knowledge transfer<sup>6</sup>. “The integration of indigenous economies into the global market has led to the devaluation of traditional knowledge and practices, such as sustainable agriculture and natural resource management”<sup>7</sup>

Understanding the globalization and it's effect on Indigenous communities in India can be cumbersome though on one hand globalization opened new doors which created abundance of economic opportunities through increased access to market, employment and development of enterprises<sup>8</sup> but at the same time created hardships due to unequal distribution of benefits to the Indigenous community due to which until today the communities have low or no access to proper education, healthcare or shelter has not only their Traditional Knowledge was exploited but their land and their land rights were exploited even further. This has not only disrupted their traditional livelihoods but also threatened their cultural identities and spiritual connections to the land.

### **Impact & Effect of Globalization on Indigenous Communities**

The notion of Globalization has been divided into 3 phases, the First phase or first Globalization started in the year 1879 to 1914 and then the Second phase began in 1944 to 1971 and third phase began in 1989 and continues up until today. <sup>9</sup> The doors to trade and commerce had opened up in the First phase of Globalization but this notion was truly adapted by many countries only by the third phase only. Globalization was allowed only in 1991 in India when the NEP, the National Economic Policy was

<sup>3</sup> ‘Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge (IJTK)’. Accessed 12 August 2024. <https://or.niscpr.res.in/index.php/IJTK>.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Globalization and Its Impact on Indigenous Cultures’. Accessed 12 August 2024. <https://leadthechange.bard.edu/blog/globalization-and-its-impact-on-indigenous-cultures>.

<sup>5</sup> Aniruddha Vithal Babar. (2016) "Analytical Study of the Impact of Globalization on Tribal Communities in India with Reference To Economic Justice, All Inclusive Growth and Social Transformation." <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/234695398.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> IGNOU. (2015) "UNIT 1 GLOBALIZATION AND INDIGENOUS CULTURES." <https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/38964/1/Unit-1.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Erica-Irene Daes. (2004) "The impact of globalization on Indigenous Intellectual Property and Cultures." <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/news/speeches/impact-globalization-indigenous-intellectual-property-and-cultures>

<sup>8</sup> Navdeep Kaur. (2013) "Impact of Globalization on Culture, Migration and Indigenous People." <https://purja.puchd.ac.in/volumexx13/3.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Piketty, Thomas, and Arthur Goldhammer. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014. [http://archive.org/details/isbn\\_9780674430006](http://archive.org/details/isbn_9780674430006).

adapted in India. “the Indian Economy was then transformed from a Closed Door Economy to an Open Door Economy”<sup>10</sup> though the idea was brought before Late Rajiv Gandhi’s government in the 1980’s but it was only PM Narashimah Rao who integrated this phenomena in to the Indian Economy.<sup>11</sup>

Globalization though opened new doors to Indigenous Communities had a great impact on the Indigenous Communities. Indigenous communities received more recognition due to globalization. Globalization has created Economic Opportunities for the Indigenous People which has helped them improve their basic living conditions. Indigenous People have benefited from globalization as it has provided them with the access to the markets. Globalization has opened up new markets for Indigenous Products. Indigenous communities have been connected to global supply chains which has helped them sell their Traditional Crafts, foods and other goods to a wider audience which has finally resulted in increase in their income and economic sustainability.

Globalization has not only provided help the communities build connection worldwide but has also attracted investments in their areas leading to better infrastructure. Investment not only created roads and schools for their children but also generated employment amongst them for development of their areas which improved their standard of living and helped them to be at par with the other citizens of the country as well. Globalization has also helped to indigenous people to share their culture with the world. Globalization has helped the Indigenous people to exchange their ideas, knowledge and cultural with the world. People around the world have started to recognize the Indigenous people through their dialect, which includes their languages. This has led to better recognition of the Indigenous People around the world. The approach to a greater communication and connect with Indigenous People around the world enabled them to advocate for their rights and interests more effectively. Many international forums and organizations have advocated and provided platforms for them to be heard in various discussions and has tried them to be at par with the others as well.

Globalization has led to greater recognition of the Traditional Knowledge in the environment management. The world faces climate change and biodiversity loss but through Indigenous Knowledge and practise which often emphasize sustainability and conservation which have helped to minimize climate change. “Indigenous communities in the Philippines possess rich traditional ecological knowledge that has proven valuable for climate change adaptation. Their knowledge of native plant species, forest management practices, and watershed protection has informed local initiatives to restore degraded ecosystems, conserve biodiversity, and reduce vulnerability to climate-related hazards.”<sup>12</sup>.

“In parts of India, indigenous communities have practiced agroforestry for centuries. Agroforestry combines agricultural crops with trees to optimize land use and enhance ecosystem services. Indigenous farmers have integrated traditional knowledge of crop diversity, soil management, and tree planting techniques to develop resilient agroforestry systems that contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation.”<sup>13</sup> due these increased global awareness the indigenous people have led conservation initiatives which not only protect their traditional lands but also reinforces their role as factors or Biodiversity.<sup>14</sup>

There have been several factors that have helped the Indigenous Communities to grow for their betterment and development but Globalization has also led to several issues which has hindered the Indigenous People majorly. Not only have they been exploited and ripped off their knowledge without any consent or sharing they have also dealt with several other issues which have severely affected them as a community.

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<sup>10</sup> Iqbal, Badar Alam. ‘Introduction to the Special Issue on Globalization of Indian Economy and Foreign Direct Investment’. *Transnational Corporations Review*, 3 July 2017. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19186444.2017.1370807>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>12</sup> ‘Traditional Knowledge and Climate Change: An Initial Exploration’. Accessed 25 June 2024. <https://www.gdrc.org/heritage/trad-know.html>.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>14</sup> Phil Smith . ‘Globalisation and the Indigenous Minority Communities of North-Eastern Cambodia’. Accessed 14 August 2024. <https://www.dvv-international.de/en/adult-education-and-development/editions/aed-822015-global-citizenship-education/articles/globalisation-and-the-indigenous-minority-communities-of-north-eastern-cambodia>.

A phenomenon will always have two sides of the coin and in the case of globalization it has. This has effected the communities more than it has benefited them. Even though it benefited the communities to bridge the gap in the global markets it also subjugated the Indigenous people and ripped them off their Traditional Knowledge to an extinct they couldn't even claim their knowledge to be theirs as they were unaware of their rights. Globalization had caused enough loss of traditional knowledge as Indigenous communities faced discrimination, exploitation, dispossession and colonization and not just unawareness of their rights, it eroded them to maintain their ability and transmit their Traditional Knowledge to future Generations<sup>15</sup>. The pace at which globalization had entered the lives of Indigenous people for development disrupted their ways of living.

Globalization has contributed to the erosion of indigenous cultures in India and the world. The influx of global media and consumer culture has introduced Western values and lifestyles, often overshadowing traditional practices<sup>16</sup>. This has led to a homogenization of cultural expressions, where unique local customs and languages are at risk of being lost as younger generations gravitate towards mainstream global culture<sup>17</sup>. The dominance of consumerism has resulted in a shift in values, where material wealth is prioritized over cultural heritage, undermining the identity of indigenous communities.<sup>18</sup>

“The island nation of Papua New Guinea is home to more than 9 million people speaking about 840 languages—12 percent of the world’s approximately 7,000 languages. It is also the world’s most floristically diverse island, harboring about 5 percent of the world’s plant species. But a new study by Papua New Guinea native found that a sizable gap in indigenous language fluency has opened up between teenage students and their parents. Along with this decline, the younger generation showed lesser knowledge of traditional practices like hunting, fishing, native medicinal plant use, farming, and woodworking and carpentry. But as they lost these traditional skills, they gained in contemporary technical skills like mobile phone and computer use.”<sup>19</sup>

The essence of Traditional Knowledge is their respective Indigenous Communities identity and they are recognized from the knowledge they hold. Globalization under the garb of global exposure has taken it away. “The invasive development driven by globalization to service growth-based economies has a negative impact on the sustainable environments and natural resources that indigenous communities depend on for their traditional livelihoods”<sup>20</sup> Globalization has had considerable negative impacts on indigenous traditional handicraft industries, causing them to gradually decline and leading to loss of livelihoods for traditional knowledge holders”<sup>21</sup>

Inspite of so many challenges faced by the Indigenous People there are certain communities across the globe that have still retained their Traditional Knowledge and not only them but their Governments have also placed a key role in order to safeguard them like, The Sami people of Northern Europe Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia have been able to maintain their traditional reindeer herding practices, which are protected by their respective governments.<sup>22</sup> There are other Indigenous People in different parts of the world that have safeguarded their Knowledge as well inspite of facing the Globalization phenomena. The Maori of New Zealand they have experienced a cultural renaissance in recent decades, with a resurgence in the use of the Maori

<sup>15</sup> Nations, United. ‘Traditional knowledge – an answer to the most pressing global problems? | संयुक्त राष्ट्र’. United Nations. United Nations. Accessed 16 August 2024. <https://www.un.org/hi/desa/traditional-knowledge-%E2%80%93-answer-most-pressing-global-problems>.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Impact of Globalization on Tribal Culture in - ProQuest’. Accessed 16 August 2024. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1674255562?sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals>.

<sup>17</sup> R., Anjana. ‘The Impact of Globalization on Indigenous Culture: An Overview’. *Indian Journal of Law and Legal Research* 4 Issue 1 (2022): 1.

<sup>18</sup> Supra Note 10

<sup>19</sup> ‘Globalization, the Bane of Traditional Languages and Skills | RIO’. Accessed 16 August 2024. <https://research.umn.edu/news/globalization-bane-traditional-languages-and-skills>.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Globalization and Its Impact on Indigenous Cultures’. Accessed 12 August 2024. <https://leadthechange.bard.edu/blog/globalization-and-its-impact-on-indigenous-cultures>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> ‘The Sami People & Culture - Northern Norway’. Accessed 16 August 2024. <https://www.fjordtours.com/en/norway/people-and-culture/indigenous-sami-people>

language, traditional arts, and cultural practices. The New Zealand government has made efforts to protect Maori land rights and recognize the importance of Maori culture, such as incorporating Maori language and customs into government institutions.<sup>23</sup> The Quechua people of Peru have maintained their traditional agricultural practices, such as growing potatoes and quinoa, despite the pressures of globalization. Quechua communities have also successfully revived traditional textile production and weaving techniques, creating a thriving artisanal economy.

Thus, this clearly shows that Globalization has had a negative impact on the Indigenous People and on their community, some could withstand the thriving Global changes and the others could not which is why they became extinct due to commercial exploitation of their knowledge and rights. Seeing the Globalization trend the WIPO had enforced various agreements/conventions/protocols at the International level to safeguard and protect the rights but did the aforesaid mentioned initiatives help safeguard the communities?

### **International initiatives to protect Indigenous communities and their Knowledge.**

The protection at the International Level for the protection of Industrial Property has been prevalent since 1883, Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property also known as the Paris Convention which was applicable way before Globalization. Various other treaties/agreements/protocol established a framework for protecting Intellectual Property Right with well-defined rules and standards which eventually culminated to form the TRIPS agreement in 1999( Trade-Related aspects for Intellectual Property Rights) but the TRIPS completely forgot to inculcate Traditional Knowledge as an important branch of Intellectual Property Rights. The TRIPS is silent about Indigenous People Rights and about their Traditional Knowledge as well.

Protection of Traditional Knowledge and rights of the Indigenous People began way before Globalization had gained attention around the world and which is why International forums brought various reforms for the protection of Traditional Knowledge. The Convention for Biodiversity also called the CBD mentions about the Traditional Knowledge under article 8(j)<sup>24</sup>. The WIPO formed the ICG (Intergovernmental Committee) so that it could undertake negotiations to finalize an instrument for protecting Traditional Knowledge, cultural expressions and genetic resources.<sup>25</sup> Subsequently United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)<sup>26</sup> was formed to resolve issues of the indigenous people related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health, and human rights. The ILO convention 169<sup>27</sup> states the rights of the Indigenous and tribal people including providing protection to their Traditional Knowledge. The BONN guidelines<sup>28</sup> & Nagaya Protocol<sup>29</sup> were the initial guidelines that brought out the principles of PIC (Prior Informed consent) and ABS (Access Benefit Sharing) which was to empower the

<sup>23</sup> 'Māori - Indigenous, Culture, New Zealand | Britannica', 8 August 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Maori>.

<sup>24</sup> It states that Each contracting Party shall, as far as possible and as appropriate: Subject to national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge innovations and practices Unit, Biosafety. 'Article 8(j) - Traditional Knowledge, Innovations and Practices'. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 8 August 2024. <https://www.cbd.int/traditional/default.shtml>.

<sup>25</sup> 'Intergovernmental Committee (IGC)'. Accessed 17 August 2024. <https://www.wipo.int/tk/en/igc/index.html>.

<sup>26</sup> 'United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) - Twenty-Second Session | Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform'. Accessed 17 August 2024. [https://icipp.unfccc.int/node/693?gad\\_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjwlIG2BhC4ARIsADBgpVQ45aVsyqn3DWw kjUOzIDGFMr2eVjYSWoe\\_cEOLKUbYj050iaEcevoaAiQJEAALw\\_wcB](https://icipp.unfccc.int/node/693?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjwlIG2BhC4ARIsADBgpVQ45aVsyqn3DWw kjUOzIDGFMr2eVjYSWoe_cEOLKUbYj050iaEcevoaAiQJEAALw_wcB).

<sup>27</sup> 'Convention C169 - Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)'. Accessed 17 August 2024. [https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C169](https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169)

<sup>28</sup> Tully, Stephen. 'The Bonn Guidelines on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing'. Review of European, Comparative & International Environmental Law 12 (2003): 84.

<sup>29</sup> Unit, Biosafety. 'The Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing'. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 14 August 2024. <https://www.cbd.int/abs/default.shtml>.

Indigenous People that without their consent their Traditional Knowledge will not be used and after giving consent the benefit which arises from the use of the Traditional Knowledge will be equally shared among the Indigenous communities.

International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB)<sup>30</sup> was formed to advocate for indigenous rights, preservation of traditional knowledge systems, and sustainable management of natural resources. Each forum focuses on pertinent themes such as climate change adaptation, ecosystem management, and the role of traditional governance in biodiversity conservation.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007 also known as the Doha Declaration “was the most comprehensive instrument detailing the rights of indigenous peoples in international law and policy, containing minimum standards for the recognition, protection and promotion of these rights. It establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity, wellbeing and rights of the world's indigenous peoples.”<sup>31</sup>

In spite of so many agreements/protocols/guidelines/conventions, the Indigenous Knowledge and practices were at a high risk due to Globalization as the Indigenous communities were completely unaware about these agreements/protocols etc as they are those set of communities which are not treated equally in the mainstream society which is why exploiting them is easier as they are completely clueless about their rights.

Even having so many initiatives in place the exploitation of the Indigenous communities are ongoing as the TRIPS is silent on Indigenous communities and their holders right inspite of covering all braches of IPR, the policy makers of TRIPS didn't not mention about the TK and its protection which why it lacks SUI Generis protection at the International Level. Only if he have unified legal instrument actively safeguarded the Traditional Knowledge and it's holders we will be in a better place to protect the Indigenous Communities inspite of these phenomena like Globalization hitting our societies in the near future.

Until then it every individual, government's duty to protect their Indigenous Communities at the national level either by providing them either with positive mechanisms for protection or provide them the support whereby the guidelines of the Nagoya Protocol of PIC and ABS are met so that until and unless there is a International legal mechanism for protection available the communities can be safeguarded at the national level,

#### **Part IV: Conclusion**

Globalization has had a greater impact on the Indigenous communities around the world, affecting their Intellectual Property Rights (Traditional Knowledge), land rights, cultural preservation, economic well-being, and social cohesion. While some communities have been able to adapt and take advantage of new opportunities, many others have faced significant challenges and threats to their way of life. It of utmost importance that government of these communities take full responsibility of their protection until and unless a proper instrument is not enforced before the WIPO.

It is essential that policy makers, developmental agencies and global community work hand in hand to ensure that the benefits of globalization are equitably distributed and that their rights, cultures, and traditional knowledge are respected and protected. This will require a multi-pronged approach that includes legal reforms to strengthen land rights and free, prior, and informed consent processes; investments in culturally appropriate education and healthcare; the promotion of sustainable economic models that integrate traditional knowledge; and the active participation of indigenous communities in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

By embracing a more inclusive and equitable model of globalization that respects the rights and aspirations of indigenous peoples, we can work towards a more just and sustainable future for all. In spite of so many International mechamsims being in place, the exploitation of the Indigenous

<sup>30</sup> 'IIFB – International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity'. Accessed 17 May 2024. <https://iifb-indigenous.org/>.

<sup>31</sup> OHCHR. 'UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples'. Accessed 17 April 2024. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/indigenous-peoples/un-declaration-rights-indigenous-peoples>.

Communities up until today continue to be an easy target for the large corporates knowing their unawareness of the rights.

“Respecting cultural identity and promoting socio-economic equity through participation and benefit sharing are possible as long as decisions are made democratically by states, by companies, by international institutions and by indigenous people”<sup>32</sup> It should be the essential and top most priority of government to maintain the socio-economic equity balance within their country/state and ensure that no further exploitation of the Indigenous communities take place under the garb of Globalization. Until we do have a proper legal instrument at the International level it the duty of the each government of their country and state to protect their own Indigenous communities in order to protect the eradication of Traditional Knowledge and their Holders.

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<sup>32</sup> Human Development Report 2004 -Cultural Liberty in Today’s Diverse World, UNDP, New York, Oxford University