

# Role of Globalization in the Decline of Traditional Occupations in Bangladesh

Reza Forhad <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Mass Communication & Journalism, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

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### Corresponding Author:

Name: Reza Forhad

Email: reza.mcj@gmail.com

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## ABSTRACT

The socio-economic landscape of Bangladesh has been influenced by Globalization, as a result, the traditional occupations such as snake-charming, street barbering, pottery, and blacksmithing are declining day by day. Industrial growth, as a result of globalization, has created new job opportunities, particularly in the ready-made garment (RMG) sector, drawing workers away from these ancient professions. The objective of this study is to explore the social, economic and cultural factors behind the decline of traditional professions and to assess the role of government policies and social attitudes in preserving these professions. A qualitative approach was used, where secondary data taken from peer-reviewed articles, books and reports were analyzed. The study analyzed the impact of globalization using theories such as liberalism, constructivism and world systems theory. The study finds that globalization, economic modernization and changing social values have marginalized traditional professions. Economic factors such as industrial competition and cultural shifts towards modernity have made these professions less sustainable. The study uniquely highlights the role of government policies and the need for targeted interventions in preserving cultural heritage within economic growth. The study calls for a balanced approach, which encourages both economic development and cultural preservation, ensuring that globalization does not cause irreversible damage to traditional professions in Bangladesh.

## 1. Introduction

Globalization has significantly influenced Bangladesh's economic and cultural landscapes, leading to a decline in traditional occupations such as snake-charming, street barbering, pottery, oarsmanship, and blacksmithing. The rise of export-oriented industries, particularly the ready-made garment (RMG) sector, has created new employment opportunities that attract workers away from ancestral professions. Between 2013 and 2016-17, agricultural employment in Bangladesh declined significantly, while industrial growth remained modest (Islam & Khan, 2019). The allure of higher wages and better working conditions in urban centers has further prompted artisans to abandon their traditional crafts.

Cultural globalization has also shaped societal preferences, with younger generations often viewing traditional occupations as less prestigious or economically viable. The Bede community, known for snake-charming, has experienced a sharp decline in their

livelihood due to changing societal attitudes and reduced demand (Rahman, 2021). Similarly, the Jamdani weaving industry, a hallmark of Bangladesh's cultural heritage, faces challenges from mass-produced textiles and insufficient government support for artisans (Ahmed, 2022). Moreover, limited marketing strategies and a lack of policy focus on traditional crafts have accelerated the erosion of these professions. Globalization's economic and cultural forces have unintentionally marginalized Bangladesh's traditional occupations. These shifts highlight the urgent need to preserve such professions to safeguard the country's rich cultural heritage.

## 2. Objectives of the Study:

- To identify the socio-economic and cultural factors influenced by globalization that contribute to the decline of traditional occupations in Bangladesh.
- To analyze the economic challenges faced by individuals involved in traditional occupations.
- To assess the role of government policies and societal attitudes in preserving traditional occupations and promoting cultural heritage.

## 3. Literature Review

Globalization has profoundly impacted traditional occupations in Bangladesh, leading to significant socio-economic and cultural transformations. This literature review examines the effects of globalization on professions such as snake-charming, street barbering, pottery, oarsmanship, and blacksmithing, through the lenses of liberalism, constructivism, and world-systems theory.

### 3.1 Impact of Globalization on Traditional Occupations

The expansion of global trade and the rise of export-oriented industries, particularly the ready-made garment (RMG) sector, have created new employment opportunities in Bangladesh. This shift has attracted labor away from traditional crafts, leading to a decline in these professions. For instance, the Bede community, traditionally known for snake-charming, has experienced a decline in their customary livelihood due to reduced demand and changing societal attitudes (Rahman, 2021). Similarly, the Jamdani weaving industry, once a flourishing traditional craft, has faced challenges due to competition from mass-produced textiles and a lack of adequate support for artisans (Ahmed, 2022).

### 3.2 Liberalism and Economic Shifts

Liberalism emphasizes free markets and minimal state intervention, advocating for economic activities driven by supply and demand (Smith, 1776). In Bangladesh, liberal economic policies have facilitated the growth of the RMG sector, attracting investment and generating employment. However, this market-driven approach has also led to the marginalization of traditional occupations that cannot compete with industrial-scale production. The focus on economic efficiency and comparative advantage has resulted in the neglect of traditional crafts, which are often less profitable in a liberalized economy.

### 3.3 Constructivism and Cultural Transformation

Constructivism posits that social realities are constructed through collective beliefs and shared understandings (Wendt, 1992). Globalization has introduced new cultural norms and values in Bangladesh, influencing societal perceptions of traditional occupations. Younger generations, exposed to global media and consumer culture, may perceive traditional crafts as outdated or less prestigious, leading to a decline in the transmission of these skills. This shift in cultural values contributes to the erosion of traditional occupations, as societal support diminishes over time.

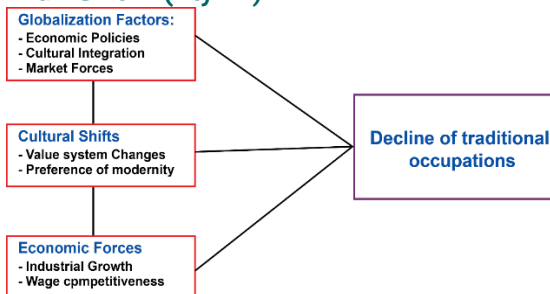
### 3.4. World-Systems Theory and Global Economic Integration

World-systems theory, introduced by Wallerstein (1974), views the global economy as a complex system structured into core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral nations. Bangladesh, positioned in the periphery, has integrated into the global economy primarily through labor-intensive industries like the RMG sector. This integration has led to economic growth but has also reinforced dependency on low-wage labor markets. Traditional occupations, lacking integration into global value chains, struggle to survive in this competitive environment, leading to their gradual decline.

### 3.5 Research Gap

While existing literature addresses the economic and cultural impacts of globalization on traditional occupations in Bangladesh, there is a paucity of research focusing on the intersection of policy interventions and the preservation of these professions. Specifically, studies examining the effectiveness of government initiatives, non-governmental organizations, and community efforts in sustaining traditional crafts are limited. Future research should explore strategies to balance economic development with cultural preservation, ensuring that globalization does not lead to the irreversible loss of Bangladesh's rich artisanal heritage.

## 4. Analytical Framework (Ety-02)



Source: Constructed by the authors

The analytical framework depicts the pathways of globalization's impact on the decline of traditional occupations in Bangladesh, including economic, cultural and policy dimensions. Elements of globalization such as economic policies, cultural integration, and market forces directly affect traditional livelihoods. In addition,

cultural changes, such as changing social values and the increasing preference for modern occupations, intensify this impact (Rahman, 2021). Economic forces such as industrial growth and wage competition play a significant role in the displacement of workers from traditional industries to industrial sectors. These impacts are driven by policy interventions and community support, which either mitigate or accelerate the decline of occupations such as snake-charming, street barbering, pottery, oarsmanship, and blacksmithing. Ultimately, the combined pressures of globalization, socio-economic change, and inadequate intermediary systems accelerate the decline of traditional occupations (Ahmed, 2022).

## 5. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore the decline of traditional occupations in Bangladesh due to globalization. The research relies entirely on secondary data collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and reports indexed in reputable academic databases. A structured search strategy was employed using keywords such as "traditional occupations in Bangladesh," "globalization impact," "cultural erosion," and "economic transformation." Only studies published in credible sources were considered to ensure the reliability and relevance of the data. The collected data was analyzed thematically to identify patterns and themes related to the socio-economic and cultural factors influencing the decline of traditional occupations. The analysis focused on understanding how globalization and associated shifts in economic and cultural practices have contributed to this phenomenon. This method allowed for a comprehensive exploration of existing literature, aligning with the study's objectives to examine the socio-cultural and economic impacts of globalization.

## 6. Findings

This study has identified some factors responsible to the decline of traditional occupations in Bangladesh. The findings are organized into thematic areas using an analytical framework, which relates to socio-economic and cultural factors, mediating variables, and their effects. These findings are analyzed with relevant theories, including hyper-globalism, world systems theory, and constructivism.

### 6.1. Impact of Globalization Factors

#### 6.1.1 Economic Policies and Market Forces

Globalization has brought significant economic transformations to Bangladesh, with liberalized trade policies and foreign investments contributing to industrial growth. However, these changes have marginalized traditional occupations such as snake-charming, blacksmithing, and pottery. For example, cheaper industrial goods have replaced handmade pottery, and the demand for traditional blacksmith tools has dwindled due to modern machinery (Ahmed, 2022; Rashid, 2021). The **hyper-globalism theory**, which emphasizes the integration of local economies into the global market, explains this shift as a consequence of prioritizing economic efficiency over cultural preservation. When people can easily buy knives of different designs from "Best Buy" or any other supershop in Bangladesh, then why they go to the blacksmiths.

### 6.1.2 Cultural Integration and Preferences

Cultural integration under globalization has led to shifts in societal preferences, with people increasingly adopting modern lifestyles and discarding traditional practices. For instance, the younger generation often perceives traditional occupations as outdated and less prestigious (Rahman & Sultana, 2020). Now people enjoy movie on OTT platforms, leading to the decline of “Jatra Pala”. This aligns with the **constructivist theory**, which highlights the influence of changing social norms and identities on economic practices.

## 6. 2. Role of Cultural Shifts

### 6.2.1 Changing Social Values

The decline in traditional occupations is also linked to changing social values. Communities that once held these occupations in high regard now associate them with poverty and backwardness. For example, the snake-charming community (Bede) faces stigmatization and exclusion, forcing many to abandon their ancestral profession (Khan, 2022). This supports the **world systems theory**, which argues that peripheral cultures are often undermined by the cultural dominance of core economies. Modernization has shifted our preference for treatment from “Kabiraji” to medical health care.

### 6.2.2 Influence of Education and Urbanization

Education and urbanization have played a dual role in cultural shifts. While they have created opportunities for upward mobility, they have also led to a loss of interest in traditional skills. Educated individuals from rural areas prefer modern jobs over traditional crafts, leading to a generational gap in the continuation of these professions (Hossain, 2021).

## 6.3. Economic Forces and Industrial Growth

### 6.3.1 Competition with Industrial Products

Traditional occupations face severe competition from industrial products that are mass-produced and cheaper. For instance, handcrafted items such as pottery and metal tools are being replaced by plastic and factory-made goods. This has made it difficult for traditional artisans to sustain their livelihoods (Ahmed & Alam, 2023).

### 6.3.2 Decline in Demand

Globalization has shifted demand from traditional to industrial goods, particularly in urban markets. The global preference for standardized products over handmade ones has marginalized traditional artisans (Sarker, 2022). There are different brands like Pran, Fresh, Radhuni, Rani Gura etc who offer “Ready Masala Powder” in our country. Then why people will use “Shil Pata”, where they get ready masala powder. This aligns with the hyper-globalism perspective, which views globalization as a homogenizing force that often erodes local uniqueness.

## 6.4. Decline of Traditional Occupations

### 6.4.1 Socio-Economic Marginalization

The socio-economic marginalization of communities dependent on traditional occupations is a direct outcome of globalization. For instance, the boatmen community now struggles with poverty as their traditional performances lose relevance in a modernized society, where we prefer fast movement by bridge (Khan, 2022). Similarly, street barbers and blacksmiths face declining clientele as modern alternatives dominate.

### 6.4.2 Loss of Cultural Heritage

The erosion of traditional occupations also signifies a loss of cultural heritage. The crafts and skills passed down through generations are vanishing, leading to a cultural void that impacts national identity (Rahman & Sultana, 2020). This supports the constructivist view that cultural shifts influence economic practices and societal values.

## 7. Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the complex interplay between globalization and the decline of traditional occupations in Bangladesh. While globalization has undoubtedly spurred economic growth, particularly through industrial expansion, it has also led to the marginalization of traditional crafts. This trend aligns with the hyper-globalism theory, which asserts that the integration of local economies into the global market prioritizes efficiency and economic growth over cultural preservation. As a result, traditional occupations like snake-charming, pottery, and blacksmithing struggle to survive in an environment dominated by mass-produced goods.

The world-systems theory further explains the economic disparities faced by traditional professions, as Bangladesh, situated in the periphery, remains economically dependent on core nations. This dependency weakens the local artisan sector, which lacks the resources and integration into global value chains to compete effectively with industrialized products. Moreover, societal changes, as highlighted by constructivism, have shifted perceptions of traditional crafts. Younger generations, influenced by global consumer culture, increasingly view these occupations as outdated or unprestigious, contributing to their decline.

The role of policy interventions is crucial in addressing this decline. The lack of targeted government support for traditional crafts has exacerbated the situation, leaving many artisans vulnerable. To counter this, a more balanced approach is necessary—one that fosters both economic development and cultural preservation. Initiatives aimed at enhancing artisan skills, promoting fair trade, and raising cultural awareness can help mitigate the negative effects of globalization, ensuring the survival of Bangladesh's rich artisanal heritage for future generations.

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## 7. Conclusion

Globalization has significantly impacted traditional occupations in Bangladesh, leading to their decline due to economic shifts, cultural changes, and limited policy support. While industrial growth and modernization have brought economic benefits, they have also pushed traditional crafts and livelihoods into the margins. However, there are ways to cope with these challenges and ensure the survival of these valuable professions. One key strategy is the implementation of supportive government policies that focus on preserving traditional occupations. This includes offering financial assistance, creating training programs, and providing marketing support to connect artisans with local and global markets. Additionally, promoting fair trade initiatives can help ensure artisans receive fair compensation for their work, making these professions more sustainable.

Community involvement is also essential. Local communities can play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage by passing down traditional skills to younger generations. Awareness campaigns that highlight the importance of these occupations and their cultural value can help change societal attitudes, making traditional professions more respected and sought after. Education can also be a tool for coping. By integrating the importance of traditional crafts into school curricula and vocational training, young people may develop an interest in continuing these professions, seeing them as viable career options. In conclusion, while globalization poses significant challenges to traditional occupations in Bangladesh, a combination of policy support, community engagement, and cultural awareness can help preserve these valuable skills for future generations. This balanced approach will ensure that economic development does not come at the cost of cultural loss.

## 8. Recommendations

To preserve Bangladesh's traditional occupations while embracing globalization, the following recommendations are proposed:

- **Strengthen Policy Support:** The government should develop and implement targeted policies to support traditional artisans. This includes providing financial assistance, tax benefits, and subsidies for raw materials and tools to reduce production costs (Ahmed, 2022).
- **Promote Skill Development:** Training programs should be organized to teach and refine traditional skills while incorporating modern techniques to increase efficiency and market appeal (Hossain, 2021).
- **Enhance Market Access:** Initiatives like fair trade programs and e-commerce platforms can help artisans reach local and global markets, ensuring fair compensation and demand for their products (Chowdhury, 2022).
- **Cultural Awareness Campaigns:** Awareness campaigns should highlight the cultural value and heritage associated with traditional occupations. Schools and media can promote these crafts to instill respect and interest among younger generations (Rahman & Sultana, 2020).

- **Encourage Community Participation:** Communities should actively support artisans by purchasing handmade products and encouraging the transfer of skills to future generations (Khan, 2022).
- **Integrate Traditional Crafts with Tourism:** Linking traditional occupations to tourism can create new opportunities. For example, showcasing crafts and performances at cultural events can attract both local and international tourists (Rashid, 2021).

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