

GLOBALIZATION AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA**Dr. Arun Paudmal**

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The status of women in any civilization shows the stage of evolution at which the civilization has arrived. The term status includes not only personal and proprietary rights but also duties, liabilities and disabilities. India is a traditional bound male dominated society. Women, get very little standing in this country, (gender discrimination can be seen at various stages of life. Female child are unwanted in the family. The rate of Female Feticide is very high. Noble Loreto Amarteya Sen called them "Missing Women". Starting from birth girls, do not receive as much care and commitment from their parents and society as the boys. They do not get nutritious diet. Their literacy rates are low compared to men. There are several reasons why families choose not to educate their daughters. One reason is that parents get nothing in return from the education of their daughters. Another reason is that all the females in, a household have the responsibility of the house work.

Women's Issues could receive attention for the first time in the Nineteenth century. Social reformers all over the country showed their deep concern over women's issues such as Sati, child marriage, female infanticide, widowhood, polygamy, devdasi and education. The Principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women.

From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards has been a market shift in the approach

to women's issues from welfare to development. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women.¹

According to Can: bridge English Dictionary 'empowerment' means 'to authorize'. In the context of the people, they have to be authorized to have control over their own lives. Thus, women empowerment can be interpreted as totality of empowerment including political, social, cultural, and other dimension of human life as also the physical, moral and intellectual.

Mahatma Gandhi saw men and women as equals, complementing each other. Once he said in the All India Women's Conference on December 23, 1936 was, "when women, whom we call abala becomes sabala, all those who are helpless will become powerful." After Gandhi, Lohia was the first political thinker in India to fight for the equal status of women in all walks of life. According to Lohia, participation of women in the policy-making processes at the domestic and public levels is the most important indicator of women empowerment.² He was fully convinced that two segregations of caste and woman r are primarily responsible for the decline of spirit in India.³ There is no doubt about the fact that during last three decades there has been a change in the concept of women empowerment. A woman today expects herself - and rightly so - to be treated as an individual, a living human being, entitled to the same dignity and status, as her male counterparts. Thus for empowerment women requires a set of assets and capabilities at the individual level (such as health, education and employment) and at the collective level (for instance the ability to organize and mobilize to take action to solve their problems).

Goal and Objectives:

The goal of this empowerment policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. The policy will be widely disseminated so as to encourage active participation of all stakeholders for achieving its goals.

- (1) Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential.

- (2) Equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office etc.
- (3) Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation.
- (4) Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.
- (5) Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child.
- (6) Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process.

Globalization:

Globalization refers to a process of deepening economic integration increasing economic openness and growing economic inter dependence between countries in the world economy. At political level it diminishes the role of state by the process of deregulation and-liberalization. At the level of economy, globalization has been associated with the trend towards increasing economic liberalization. This has reflected in free trade and more deregulated labour good and financial markets. The term globalization is derived from the root word "globalize", which refers to the emergence of an international network of social and economic systems.⁴ Roland Robertson, Professor of Sociology at University of Aberdeen, was the first person to define globalization as "the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole."⁵ According to Deepak Nayyar, "it can be defined, simply, as the expansion of economic activities across political boundaries of national status. Basically it is a multi-dimensional process of economic, Political, cultural, and ideological change. It is a process of interaction among the people, and government of different countries, a process driven by international trade and investment, and aided by information technology.

Globalization in India is generally taken to mean integrating the economy of the country with the world. This, in turn, implies opening up the economy to foreign direct investment by

providing facilities to foreign companies to invest in different fields of economic activity in India. Indian economy had experienced major policy changes in early 1990s. The new economic reforms, popularly known as, Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG Model) aimed at making the Indian economy as fastest growing economy and globally competitive. India opened up the economy in the early nineties following a major crisis which led by a foreign exchange crunch that dragged the economy close to defaulting on loans. After this, India changed its economic policy called New Economic Policy Reforms. Big measures initiated as a part of this policy in the early nineties included scrapping of the industrial licensing regime, reduction in the number of areas reserved for the public sector, amendment of the monopolies and the restrictive trade practices act, designing of the privatization programme, reduction in tariff rates and change over to market determined exchange rates. These policies, adopted by Indian government have changed the picture of Indian socio, politico, and cultural scenario very fast. Our objective is to advance and share knowledge about the gender aspects of globalization and help promote mechanisms that strengthen the positive aspects and consequences of globalization, especially with respect to women empowerment and gender equality. **Globalization And Women:**

Globalization is a multi-dimensional process. It has had a mixed impact on women's rights. On the one hand, it has led to increasing violations of women's economic, political, and cultural rights. On the other hand, aspects of globalization have provided women with increasing opportunities to work in solidarity at national, regional, and international levels to demand their rights. How a woman is affected by globalization really depends on intersecting factors such as class, nationality, race, ability, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, age and education. For instance, women belonging to middle classes of India and China benefited by globalization through better employment opportunities, new technologies and increased purchasing power. While the vast majority of women in all developing countries are deprived of it. They remain in their traditional

roles of working within the home, they may continue to be marginalized and not experience the positive effects of globalization.

Women are suffering two fold. As women in developing countries move into the work force, their domestic responsibilities are not alleviated. They work two full time jobs. One in a factory, where they are paid next to nothing, the second is in the home where they are paid nothing. Many critics fear that globalization, in the sense of integration of a country into world society, will exacerbate gender inequality. It may harm women in several ways.

- Economically, through discrimination in favour of male workers, marginalization of women in unpaid or informal labour, exploitation of women in low wage sweatshop settings.
- Politically, through exclusion from the domestic political process and loss of central to global pressures.
- Culturally, through loss of identity and autonomy to a hegemonic global culture.

At the same time, many women recognize that globalization affects different groups of women in different ways, creates new standards for the treatment of women, and helps women's groups to mobilize.

Globalization and the new economic policy reforms in India have showed positive as well as negative impact on women in general and rural women in particular. Since globalization has suddenly opened up in the Indian economy at a very high speed without the required economic and social policies to provide the much required safety net, women who have been involved with production in the traditional ways, have to cope with numerous problems and yet try to avail of the opportunities which an open economy promises.

As far as women are concerned the impact of globalization can be seen at various levels. Globalization has interconnected the people through media network and internet, this facilitate the path of mixing of culture first time Indian women could get exposure in a big way. This media

network slowly and gradually changes the mindset of Indian people and forced them to come out from their traditional way of thinking. Women get advantage from this by changing their traditional roles and lifestyles. Now women are engaged in all type of activities from house keeping to house building, from agriculture to manufacturing, from cycling to flying planes. One can see working women everywhere. In fact, globalization has created a lot of impact on the lives of women in developing nations. Empirical studies show the consequences of globalization on the lives of women *are that only some are gainers while many are losers. In case of women in unorganized sector, they have been affected by unemployment, long working hours, migration, family breakdown, child labour etc. The current process of globalization is generating unbalanced outcomes, both between and within countries. Thus, the mixed type of Impact can be seen through globalization on women.

Favourable Effects of New Economic Policy:

Globalization has increased economic activities throughout the nation by reducing trade barriers. This provides opportunities for not only working women, but also women, who are becoming a larger part of the work force. New job opportunities and higher pay structure raises self confidence and brings about empowerment among women. This in turn develops feeling of equality between men and women. Thus, globalization has the power to uproot the traditional views towards women, so they can take an equal stance in society.⁶ The modern development of technology provides facility for women to interact with the world easily. This helps to generate new thoughts and inspiration to come across equal strata with the progress level of the women of transnational developed societies. Such type of interaction with the other societies push up the women population to raise their over all horizons i.e. social economic and political etc. Besides this, globalization has contributed to bring about welcome changes in the lives of women. These are:

- Enhanced business opportunities for women.

- Increasing large employment opportunities for both men and women.
- Prospects of higher and quality education have become feasible for those women who can afford them, economically and socially.
- With changing attitude towards women, especially in the urban areas, women enjoy more egalitarian set of gender relationship.
- Reduction in gender inequalities will have positive effect on women's empowerment.
- Due to globalization economic and cultural migrations have opened the path for women's exposure to better prospects at the international level.⁷

Unfavourable Effects of New Economic Policy:

Globalization has had negative implications for Indian women. It has made many international corporations richer by the billions. However, what most people are not aware of is that women in these developing countries are suffering enormously due to this expansion of corporate empires. According to Vandana Shiva, and Indian ecofeminist and scholar, globalization alongwith and scholar, globalization alongwith the support of organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have created slave wages. These wages' are not necessarily the result of "unjust" societies, but of the fact that global trade devolves the worth of people's lives and work. According to Merlin A. Taber and Sushma Batra, editors of the book "social strains of Globalization in India," development of poor women has meant the migration of men to cities, higher prices for commodities, poorer job opportunities. "The mixture of corporate capitalism and Western culture models is dissolving family and community social controls as witnessed by higher rates of family violence, rape, divorce and family breakdown."⁸

Globalization proposed a new international division of labour in which women are treated as flexible labour force. The cheap labour of Asian women is regarded as the most lucrative way to enhance profits is to move parts of the production process to poorer countries like India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh etc. Women in developing countries are flexible labour force. They are forced

to work uncomplainingly at any allotted task, however dull, physically harmful or badly paid it may be. A large number of poor women are working in very bad condition. In India, more than 90% of women work in the decentralized sector. These women have almost no control over their work and no chance for upward mobility because of the temporary nature of the work. The structural Adjustment Programme has forced working women into the unorganized sector and deprived them of their rights. The shift from a stable organized labour force to a flexible work force has meant hiring women part time on a piece rate basis, and the substitution of better- paid male labour by cheap female labour. The SAP has forced working women into the unorganized sector and deprived them of their rights such as Maternity Benefits Act (1961), Employees state Insurance Scheme, Factories Act, (1948), Plantation Labour Act, and Child Labour Act, 1976. On the one hand it appears that women are getting employment and becoming self independence but on the other hand a very dark face of globalization can be seen as it throws the double burden on women. Besides childcare and housework they perform several tasks outside the home in very cheap wages, without any protection of job security. Studies have shown that the burden of poverty falls more heavily on women than on men. The inequality in income and consumption levels between women and men has also been documented.

In spite of these problems women are facing several challenges posed by globalization. Migration of males from rural to urban forced women to bear the triple burden of caring, farming and paid employment in the rural sector. Curtailment of state provisions in child care community care and social security, will increase the dual burden of employment and family responsibilities for women in general. Globalization has reduced trade barriers. New liberalization policy allows Multinational Companies to enter into food processing and other feminized industries which will lead to reduction in low skilled women labour, migration of women especially for economic reasons often give rise to exploitation and trafficking in women at the local, regional and global levels. Globalization also promotes market culture in which buying and selling for getting more and more profits is becoming very much important. It has increased consumerism and deteriorates

the moral, ethics and values. Women are used as soft targets in two ways. First, companies are using women's body by advertising their product. In this way they treated women as consumer goods. And second, their brains can be easily moulded for buying products.

This type of consumer culture has increased the rate of crime against women tremendously. In comparison to previous days, today women are suffering from gender based violence at very large scale. A lot of cases have been registered against women based violence. It includes crimes involving sexual exploitation for economic gains like prostitution and trafficking, adultery, abduction, rape, wrongful confinement, and murder etc. According to National Crime Report Bureau, 1.5 Lakh crimes against women are registered annually out of which nearly 50,000 are related to domestic violence in their homes.⁹ In every 60 minutes, two women are raped in this country. There are also the countless cases of eve teasing, indecent gazes, pinching, brushes and comments that infringe upon the rights of women, especially in overcrowded spaces and public transport buses and trains.¹⁰ Emergence of new job structures like call centers, etc. has increased the rate of hiring women in these jobs which are full time in nature. Women, working in night shifts are very much in secured in these jobs and often become victim of violence.

There is an urgent need to review our policies and re-work our strategies so that we can take advantage of opportunities that have opened up due to globalization. We will have to enable women to gain profits of globalization. This would have to be done only by providing modern education, social security nets and laws enacted for the benefit of women should be effectively implemented.

So finally we can say that the situation facing the majority of Indian women is far from positive, however, continuous efforts are doing by the governmental or nongovernmental institutions for the betterment of women's lives. To build up capacities and capabilities of women and put them in the mainstream of development, have been the main focus of some NGOs and women's organizations. Policy formations in favour of women like Health Schemes, Child Care Schemes, Insurance Scheme, Work Security etc. are launched by the government to provide better

life condition. In summary, globalization plays a definite role in increasing opportunities for women in the work place. It does not however solve all the problems of women. The process of globalization has reached at the stage where it can not be rolled back, but it can be adjusted in accordance with our economic and social aspirations.

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